

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

2001

Video recall assessment of parent-adolescent communication and understanding

Traci L. Smith

The University of Montana

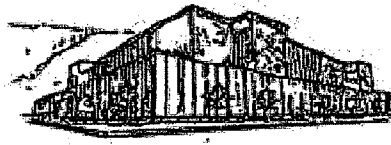
Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Smith, Traci L., "Video recall assessment of parent-adolescent communication and understanding" (2001). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5306.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5306>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



Maureen and Mike
MANSFIELD LIBRARY

The University of
Montana

Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety,
provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in
published works and reports.

****Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature****

Yes, I grant permission

☒

No, I do not grant permission

☐

Author's Signature:

Paci Z. Smith

Date:

May 31, 2001

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with
the author's explicit consent.

VIDEO RECALL ASSESSMENT
OF PARENT-ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION
AND UNDERSTANDING

by

Traci L. Smith

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

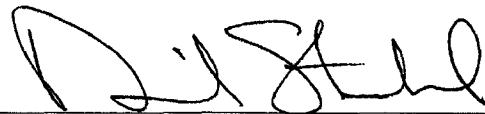
The University of Montana

2001

Approved by:



Chairperson



Dean, Graduate School

5-31-01

Date

UMI Number: EP40770

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP40770

Published by ProQuest LLC (2014). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Video Recall Assessment of Parent–Adolescent Communication and Understanding

Director: Dr. Alan L. Sillars



This research examines family communication and parent–adolescent understanding using video-recall methods for assessing understanding. Individuals from 50 families, including 2 parents and one adolescent child, held a family discussion and then tried to reconstruct the thoughts of family members while watching a videotape of their discussion. Lay theories are used as a theoretical framework to understand the perspectives of family members. The “generational stake” hypothesis, the expectation that peers replace parents, and cognitive changes during adolescence impact family members’ perceptions during conflict conversation. The results show that parents’ attribute more negative thoughts to children than children report thinking. However, children’s thoughts indicate that they perceive their parents as trying to control them and that they want to be seen as separate from their parents. Also, parents perceive their children as thinking more abstractly about the process of conversation, whereas young adolescents tend to think instead about concrete issues. These trends likely contribute to parents’ perception of negativity. Overall, the results suggest that understanding between parents and adolescents is quite limited and lay theories promote the negativity associated with parent–adolescent communication.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the coding team: Janet Postier, Rebecca Ronald, Daniel White, Marcy Yamasaki.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Rationale	5
Methods	39
Results	46
Discussion	58
Appendix A	
Sample Transcript	66
Appendix B	
Coding Procedures	67
References	73

List of Tables

Table 1	Percentage of Occurrence	47
Table 2	Number of Responses by Thematic Domain	49
Table 3	Overview of Effect Size	52
Table 4	Paired Samples Test: Set 1	54
Table 5	Paired Samples Test: Set 2	55
Table 6	Paired Samples Test: Set 3	57

List of Figures

Figure 1	
Guide to Thematic Codes	45

Introduction

The parent–child relationship is unique when viewed through the lens of communication in close relationships. On one hand, the biological implications of the parent–child relationship alone would seem to predict a high level of understanding, yet this is not routinely the case. As children reach adolescence, a pervasive sense of distance and lack of knowing enter the parent–child relationship. In other close relationships (i.e., marital or sibling), one expects that as unknowns decrease within the relationship, the level of understanding will necessarily increase (Colvin, Vogt, and Ickes, 1997). The observable trend within parent–adolescent relationships does not follow this trend, however. Many families experience an increase in parent–adolescent conflict and a decrease in understanding.

Efforts to understand the family discord associated with adolescence have drawn from several domains of research. The study of family communication during adolescence and the study of empathic accuracy provide a foundation to clarify origins of this conflict. William Ickes describes empathic accuracy as a “form of complex psychological inference in which observation, memory, knowledge, and reasoning are combined to yield insights into the thoughts and feelings of others. It may be the second greatest achievement of which the mind is capable, consciousness itself being the first” (1997, p. 2). Empathic accuracy research provides an “on-line” methodology to study the cognitive processes that reveal understanding, which measures the congruence between one person’s direct perspective (i.e., what one person actually thinks) and the other person’s meta-perspective

(i.e., his or her prediction of what the other person thinks); (Laing, Phillipsen, & Lee, 1966).

On the other hand, misunderstanding occurs when the perspectives of individuals are not congruent. There are many implications to the term “misunderstanding,” which further distinguish its application to particular relationships. According to Sillars (1998), “innocent misunderstandings” are often trivial and based on a lack of shared knowledge and will decrease as their knowledge of one another increases. Other forms of misunderstanding occur within interpersonal relationships in which complex interaction goals drive the actions and perceptions of each person involved. The understanding that occurs within families with adolescents falls into this category of relational complexity; each person within the family has a schema of intentions and perceptions which, in turn, shape their communicative interactions. Empathic accuracy, studied in the context of adolescence, can further reveal how the context may impact parents’ and adolescents’ ability to understand one another. This may also help to unlock some of the conflict processes associated with this stage of life.

The study of adolescence and family communication document that family conflict does increase during this life stage. However, the general conclusion relegates much of the cause to family patterns of communication and psychological development rather than to systematic interaction between the adolescent’s and other family members’ goals. In fact, the theory I present is that family members have both general and specific lay theories that both predict behavior and interpretation, and consequently, reinforce existing theories. These theories or preconceptions are based on knowledge constructs which permit

automatic processing of anticipated experiences. For instance, family life is portrayed through various mediums (i.e., family stories, media, self-help books from the local Barnes & Noble), which provide detailed accounts of the adolescent family experience. Also, necessary adolescent development, along with the parental stake in the family outcome, inherently foster these relationship theories. I will use the concept of lay theories to depict how conflict and misunderstanding can occur within parent–adolescent relationships.

This paper builds upon a previous study which measured the congruence of parent and adolescent perceptions using video–assisted recall to assess understanding. This research looks at the direct and meta-perspectives of parents and adolescents to predict not only the amount, but the nature of agreement that occurs. Following a videotaped discussion of typical parent–adolescent conflict areas, family participants were separated and shown their videotaped interaction. The tape was stopped every 90 seconds and participants were asked to report what they were thinking at that point in the discussion (their direct perspective) and what they believed the other family members were thinking (their meta-perspectives). Thus, the research accessed the on-line thoughts of each family member. The direct and meta-perspectives were then analyzed qualitatively to reveal areas of family understanding.

This analysis of parent–adolescent communication and understanding will advance empathic accuracy research by providing a necessary look, not only at the accuracy of their perceptions, but at possible biases and cognitions that shape person perception within this context. Discerning factors that influence the attributions we make about others within close relationships may advance communication theories of message reception and

interpretation in conflict conversation. The practical implication of this research is an enhanced awareness and understanding of the dynamics that shape family communication and conflict during adolescence.

Examining the extant literature on empathic accuracy within the more general area of interpersonal perception, we seek to provide a more complete look at how cognition and attribution are likely to subvert the seemingly straightforward process of message sending and receiving in the parent–adolescent relationship. Further, how family members think about and react to one another impacts their attributions about what other family members are thinking; this in turn, can foster misunderstanding and increase conflict. To appreciate the forces that shape parent–adolescent understanding, the following review will examine current research findings and methodology in the field of empathic accuracy, the effect of lay theories on relationships, current research on family communication during adolescence, and the cognitive and identity challenges faced by adolescents.

Rationale

Decades of research in the area of interpersonal perception have given rise to the study of empathic accuracy or how understanding does or does not occur in close relationships. People seek to understand others with whom they interact closely in terms of underlying thoughts and feelings, rather than purely objective traits. Considering the relationship between parent and child (i.e., childbirth, diapers, sickness, sadness, the first bike ride, the first kiss), it seems surprising that misunderstanding can be so integral a part of their communication during adolescence. The current investigation will connect previous research and methodology in the field of empathic accuracy with the expectations or lay theories that presuppose conflict in adolescent family communication. To understand the basis of conflict and lay relationship theories within adolescent families, we will cull the literature on adolescent development and the parenting experience to produce themes of misunderstanding. The research on empathic accuracy will be the starting point for this review.

Empathic Accuracy

The study of empathic accuracy is an important part of the larger area of interpersonal perception, which has largely focused on the context of trait perception. The trend of study within interpersonal perception has moved from the initial concentration on personal traits and interrater consensus, to focus on the less tangible and more transient states, (i.e., thoughts and feelings) of a target (Ickes, 1997). This transition is logical. Personal traits are stable, enduring, and measurable, and therefore more easily studied.

Empathic accuracy requires moment-by-moment awareness of the target's internal states (Ickes, 1993). Whereas interpersonal perception was studied successfully without the target person being present, empathic accuracy requires the involved presence of both target and rater. Hence, William Ickes and colleagues devised a research method using video replay to access the naturalistic, on-line thoughts of both target and rater, yielding the current and most accurate method of measuring empathic accuracy (Ickes, Stinson, Bissonnette, & Garcia, 1990; Ickes & Tooke, 1988).

Empathic accuracy has been studied in contexts such as relationship beliefs and patterns, marital conflict issues, and immediate thoughts (Ickes & Simpson, 1997; Sillars & Scott, 1983). This method was initially used to study unstructured dyadic interaction between strangers in a "waiting room" setting (Ickes, Stinson, Bissonnette, & Garcia, 1990; Stinson & Ickes, 1992). In these studies, the interaction of the participants is unobtrusively videotaped while they wait for the experimenter to return. When the experimenter returns, participants are partially debriefed and then asked to participate in the second phase of the study where they will assess their thoughts and feelings while viewing the videotape.

This method has since been adapted for use in clinical settings, measuring the empathic abilities of therapists (Ickes, 1993; Marangoni, Garcia, Ickes, & Teng, 1995, as cited in Ickes, 1997). Further, marital and/or dating couples have received a great deal of study with regard to the amount of understanding they have with one another (Bissonnette, Rusbult, & Kilpatrick, 1997; Thomas & Fletcher, 1997; Sillars & Scott, 1983). Ickes (1993) notes that the original study of traits has benefitted from the study of

empathic accuracy between people in close relationships, adding another dimension to the understanding that occurs between individuals.

Empathic Accuracy in Close Relationships. It is particularly important to people in close relationships to understand the thoughts, feelings, or statements of those with whom they interact closely. The diversity of research in this field indicates that there are many contexts in which empathic accuracy can be assessed. This study measures the understanding between parents and adolescents, a close relationship that is actively changing in terms of closeness and distance. Empathic accuracy between outsiders is different from empathic accuracy between people in close relationships both in the accuracy of the raters and the sources of accuracy. Thomas and Fletcher (1997) discuss these differences in terms of the sources of empathic accuracy.

It is accepted that there are both behavioral and cognitive underpinnings for understanding that occurs between a target and rater. In early studies by Ickes and colleagues, they found greater than chance levels of empathic accuracy between strangers interacting for the first time (Ickes, et al, 1990; Stinson & Ickes, 1992). The basis of accuracy in these interactions was directly related to the amount of behavioral interaction that occurred; the more interaction, the more accurate the judgments. This thinking followed the premise of social psychology that theory-driven accuracy was based in pre-existing stereotypes and biases, confounding the measurement of pure accuracy (Gage & Cronbach, 1955; Kruglanski, 1989, as cited in Thomas & Fletcher, 1997).

However, behavioral information can also mislead. For example, literature on deceptive communication reveals individual differences in a target's ability to deceive

judges (Hocking, Bauchner, Kaminski, & Miller, 1979; Kraut, 1980, as cited in Thomas & Fletcher, 1997). Good deceivers seldom exhibit stereotypic behaviors that are associated with lying (i.e., shuffling feet, avoiding eye contact); instead, they are rated high in credibility (Miller, Mongeau, & Sleight, 1986, as cited in Thomas & Fletcher). Theories of social cognition maintain that behavioral judgments are inevitably subject to cognitive processing and therefore are always influenced by the perceiver's knowledge structures or lay theories.

Judging behaviors within close relationships can be further complicated by the individual's need to both censor the information they share and/or feign emotions to achieve particular goals. A recent study by Rusbult and associates found that individuals who are highly committed to a close relationship were willing to hide their true feelings in order to preserve the relationship (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Research by Clark, Pataki, and Carver (1996) also suggests that people in close relationships feign emotions such as happiness, sadness, or anger, to accomplish specific interaction goals (i.e., to ingratiate or intimidate the partner). Therefore, in close relationships, where multiple goals are likely to shape a target's behavior, it becomes less likely that behavior will be a reliable source of empathic accuracy. Instead, it seems more probable that existing knowledge structures or lay theories will shape perception of existing behavior and resulting empathic accuracy. Relationship lay theories are discussed in more detail further in this review.

Misunderstanding. We have briefly discussed the behavioral and cognitive sources of empathic accuracy, focusing somewhat on the inaccuracy of behaviorally-based

judgements. It should be noted that motivated inaccuracy or misunderstanding has a useful role within close relationships, as illustrated by recent research (see Sillars, 1998; Ickes & Simpson, 1997). Research on marital communication and understanding identifies three conditions where greater understanding may increase relationship dissatisfaction: (1) irreconcilable differences, (2) benevolent misconceptions, and, (3) blunt, unpleasant truths.

Both popular and academic circles tend to equate understanding with competence in communication, when in fact misunderstanding can be quite functional (Spitzberg, 1994; Chovil, 1994). One can imagine many circumstances where accurate understanding of the thoughts and feelings of one's relationship partner might lead to destabilization of the relationship. Another possibility, people may not communicate clearly in order to maintain privacy or avoid negative consequences (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1992, as cited in Sillars, 1996). By way of example, consider a father and daughter discussing whether or not she should date a particular young man. The father is *thinking* "no way am I going to allow my daughter to go out with that irresponsible, untrustworthy kid." The father is *telling* his daughter that she is old enough to decide with whom she will spend her time. The father conceals his true feelings about the young man in favor of preserving trust with his daughter. Likely, she will not attribute accurate thoughts to her father based on his statement and their relationship.

However, it is important not to overstate the benefits of empathic inaccuracy. It seems unlikely that rampant misunderstanding on a long term basis could benefit a long term relationship. The common sense view that greater empathic accuracy is good for relationships is also based in earlier marital adjustment research by Noller and Vernardos

(1986), Guthrie and Noller, (1988), and Gottman and associates (1976). These authors found a positive association between marital adjustment and understanding of attitudes, role expectations, and self-perceptions of one's spouse. Later reviews of this research, however, found some of those connections to be context-specific, such as when the wife predicts the husband's thoughts, but not otherwise (Ickes & Simpson, 1997). These findings suggest that the relationship between understanding and marital adjustment is complicated and not easily explained.

Depending on interaction goals, communication is likely either to be straightforward or reflect tangled motivations, particularly in close relationships where parties struggle over scarce resources such as power, time, money, or affection (Sillars, 1998; Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). Where the goals of both parties are in alignment, communication is likely to be straightforward. In other situations, parent-adolescent interactions, for instance, the goals and motivations are presumably a bit askew. In an argument between parent and child for instance, the parent's goals may include not letting the son out past ten, but another important goal is for the child to feel trusted and empowered to make good decisions for himself. The adolescent has other goals for this communication exchange, such as extending curfew, wanting to make his own decisions, and also, preserving the love and support of his parent. The duality of the parent's and the adolescent's goals predicts a communication sequence that is likely to seem unclear and perhaps confusing to both the adolescent and parent. Although parent and child may have a high rate of empathic accuracy in many areas of their communication, not understanding another's thoughts in areas such as this allows each individual to achieve their own goals.

Therefore, depending on the goals of each party, the communication exchange may not only be unclear but intentionally and usefully misleading.

Lay Theories of Relationships

To this point we have looked at how empathic accuracy manifests itself in close relationships, with some discussion of the role of cognitions in shaping understanding. The manner in which we think about our relationships helps to shape our beliefs and expectations of one another. These are the bases of relationship lay theories. By using lay theories, we may better understand how parents and adolescents make inferences to one another based on expectation rather than specific conversation detail. We will examine the concept of lay theory as a way to frame the interaction, behavior, and attributions of parents and adolescents.

From the experiences we share with others who are close to us, we form a relationship reality in the form of knowledge constructs which allow automatic processing of routine or expected practices. It is a rather straightforward notion that people in close relationships might develop sometimes elaborate theories regarding their relationship. After all, close relationships (i.e., marital, parent-child, etc.) are typically a central element of the human experience. Also, particularly in Western society, we are bombarded with information regarding the how, what, and why of any variety of close relationship (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996). This information is then stored in the form of relationship constructs that provide a theory-based method of handling relationship information, allowing “automatic” (versus controlled) processing of routine situations. These are unlike stereotypes, where one person’s perspective is projected onto another individual.

Instead, Fletcher and Thomas (1996) describe a process whereby interpersonal behavior and the nature of lay theories are a joint product of the individuals involved.

Fletcher and Thomas postulate that people enter into relationships with existing general ideas about the relationship-self, the relationship-other and the relationship itself; these being the lay theories of relationships. Each partner has the capacity to test and extend the theories held by the other based on the differences in partner's theories. According to Fletcher and Thomas, "Judgments and decisions concerning particular relationships will be derived, in part, from the match between general lay relationship theories and lay theories dealing with specific relationships" (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996, p. 7).

Consider the example of a talented, perfectionistic mother who believes that hard work, discipline, and self-discipline will help her children to develop into responsible adults. She then has a strong-willed, free-thinking son who does not appreciate her way of thinking, and they end up feeling at odds with one another into adulthood. The daughter, however, is similar to the mother and excels at her endeavors in life. Where mother and daughter have similar relationship theories, there is a more equitable relationship. Because mother and son have divergent goals and theories, there is less of a companionate relationship.

People in close relationships often rely on lay theories, rather than data-based behavioral information, as they have at their disposal "rich and complex theories concerning their actual partners and their specific relationship" (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996, p. 7). These individuals have preconceived ideas about relationships even as they enter

into them, and as they communicate within relationships they form perceptions based on their interactions.

There is lack of agreement as to how lay theories are formed or how lay relationship theories shape perceptions of a partner's thought processes (Fletcher & Thomas, 1996). However, research on social cognition tells us that on-line processing is inextricably intertwined with the operation of knowledge constructs or lay theories as described here (Schank, 1982, as cited in Fletcher and Thomas, 1996). To this end, we can expect these relationship theories to direct individual's attention to certain categories of behavior and influence the processing of new information. This in turn will influence the behavior of both individuals. For example, consider a father and teenage son out skiing for the day. The son expects that his dad will want to ski together all morning because parents always want to spend more family time together (lay theory); the father, however, is interested in where or when they will meet for lunch. When the father asks the son what runs he wants to ski, the son automatically attributes to his father the desire to ski together and says "I think I'll just ski wherever my friends are skiing and meet you back at the car after skiing." This may align with the father's theory that kids don't want to hang out with their parents and they may go their separate ways without another thought. This automatic playing out of family interaction is a fairly typical scenario and it demonstrates the process of how lay theories reinforce themselves.

Attributional research has uncovered two key triggers of conscious, controlled, explanatory activity that might alter the course of the above interaction. Controlled attributional processing requires either negative events or unexpected outcomes (Weiner,

1985, as cited in Fletcher & Thomas, 1996). Using the example above, imagine the son responding to the father's initial comment with a request to ski together wherever the dad wants to ski. This might take the father by surprise, but, more importantly, cause the father to think about what is going on in the conversation and re-assess his expectations. If the experience takes him sufficiently by surprise, the father may conjure up an image of the lay theory that was lurking far beneath the surface and alter it somewhat, or at least recognize and explain it somehow. Murray and Holmes (1993) suggest that "the integrity and coherence of specific lay relationship theories will typically be maintained as long as possible, until under the weight of the evidence they cataclysmically collapse" (p. 19, as cited in Fletcher & Thomas, 1996).

Parents and their children have many general lay theories during the stage of adolescence. Some parental theories may regard specific stages or behaviors (i.e., "the terrible two's," or the "storm and stress" of adolescence). Adolescents also consider parents according to many of their own general and specific lay relationship theories. These theories are likely to shape the perspectives and the misunderstandings parents and adolescents have of and with one another. As adolescents experience biological and social changes which alter their patterns of communication with parents, it is likely that attributions will be made based on their theories, accurate or not.

Just as parents and adolescents have relationship lay theories, they also have dynamic personalities and relationships that defy labeling. As discussed above, both parents and adolescents are adjusting to changes within the phase of adolescence, including biological and sociological changes. Yet, cognitive processes hinder

interactants' ability to adjust or redefine aspects of their relationship. For example, although adolescents are changing dramatically in many ways, due to a parent's general lay theory of adolescent behavior, they may still perceive the child's motivations as unchanged. The specific biases and predispositions of parents and adolescents are likely to shape perceptions and understanding that occurs within the context of that situation or relationship. To this point we have referred to physiological and sociological changes within the adolescent family as contributing largely to the lay theories that are developed, and hence, the conflict. We will now turn our attention to the specific developmental goals of adolescence and subsequently, to the impact of life stage on parents, in order to generate themes of family misunderstanding.

Adolescent Development

Adolescence refers to the period of development beginning with puberty and ending with maturity. It is widely cited and generally accepted that some degree of conflict occurs during this period of time (Montemayor, 1983; Erikson, 1968), although the parent-adolescent relationship is not always the angst-filled scenario that some research suggests (Conger, 1981; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). There are many different theories of why this conflict exists, including: Freud's (1938) psychoanalytic theory based in sexual repression; Erikson's (1968) theory of adolescent crises, concerned with the identity of child; and Coleman's (1961) "youth subculture" hypothesis which postulates that peers replace parents in terms of influence. The apparent thoroughness of research on parent-adolescent relationships belies a lack of study of how communication affects their mutual misunderstanding. This study aims to round out the abundance of

psychological and sociological adolescent research by integrating the study of communication between parents and adolescents. We posit that factors such as the lay theories held by parents and children, the parent's life stage, and developmental changes in the child play a major role in their communicative relationship.

The Process of Autonomy. One of the most challenging developmental tasks for adolescents is the process of autonomy. It is a challenging time for parents as well, as they must adapt parenting skills to "let go" of their child. "Letting go" is the parental interpretation of the freedom adolescents look forward to gaining as they proceed through their teens. "Autonomy" is the psychological term for this important process that children must actualize in the stage of adolescence; it is the overarching developmental task that occurs throughout the early, middle, and late stages of adolescence.

It is useful to relate this adolescent development to parent-child understanding because it reflects cognitive changes, of which parents cannot be aware or adjust accordingly. Further, autonomy is a process of changing the way the child views, and therefore, relates to the parent. More specifically, it is a process of relinquishing childish dependencies on and conceptions of parents and moving to a more mature, realistic view (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). As children move into adolescence, they begin to de-idealize their parents and perceive them as having needs, personal characteristics, and repertoires of behavior that weren't necessarily visible within the parent-child relationship (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1987). Thus, the autonomy process contributes mightily to family conflict as the adolescent's view of the parent begins to change from dependence on the all-knowing parent to reliance on his or her own abilities.

Autonomy also consists of resolving the "identity crisis" expounded upon by Erikson (1968), which entails incorporating past and current images of self with the images of the roles they expect to assume as adults. Identity exploration (Jordaan, 1963; Matteson, 1977) occurs when adolescents are capable of considering alternatives in various domains of personal values. Whereas the traditional conceptualization of adolescence has been a time of breaking the parent–child bond, more current research shows that as autonomy and identity develop throughout adolescence, the roles and responsibilities of parent and adolescent are gradually and appropriately renegotiated (White, Speisman, & Costos, 1983; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). These studies indicate possible explanations for the conflict that is seen during this life stage; at different stages of adolescence, the child may be in different stages of identity development. As a child's identity development reaches maturity, tension between family members will begin to level out. Until that time, however, the negotiation process between parent and child will require compromise between parental and child authority over the child.

More specifically, a difficult aspect of this process is the dialectical tension between family connectedness and separateness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The level of connectedness within the family structure provides closeness and safety that no other relationship fosters. Adolescence, however, requires movement away from family connectedness and toward increased dependence on self. The parent–adolescent relationship moves along a continuum from authority and involvement toward more mutuality and separateness. This process of children moving into adolescence and beginning to renegotiate their level of connectedness with parents is a major source of

specific relationship theories. For instance, parents tend to automatically assess children more negatively at this stage and children begin to see parents as having too much control over their lives. Based on observation, these assumptions may appear to be accurate; however, by attending to the conversations between parents and adolescent children, it seems that these types of inferences (lay theories) have more impact and frequency than family members' actual thoughts and feelings of this nature.

Specific developmental changes occurring throughout adolescence help the child to accomplish autonomy. We will now look at some of these developmental changes according to the early and middle stages of adolescence to better understand the 11-14 year old youth who participated in this study.

Early Adolescence. This stage of adolescent development, occurring around ages 11-14, is the most difficult for many families. Children struggle with forming an appropriate self-image, dealing with puberty and their fluctuating cognitive ability. Self-image/identity formation is the most important development that will occur in this substage, but to accomplish this task, the adolescent must reconcile biological and social developmental changes. Physical changes such as puberty/menarche and sexual maturation coincide with a heavy reliance on same-sex friendships. The social (physical) comparison helps them to gauge whether their own development is normal and reinforces their image of self. Pre-teens struggle to regulate their changing body image with the fear of being different. This fear drives their need to spend increasing amounts of time with friends and to do things in a similar manner. The need for social comparison and the high level of conformity seen during this time reflect developmental tasks associated with

developing a satisfying and appropriate body image. These accomplishments, necessary for the adolescent, also spark theories about parent–adolescent interaction. Parents see their children “becoming rebellious,” or relying more on their friends and make inferences based on their theories about adolescence. The adolescent, in turn, feels the parent hold more tightly to their waning control over the adolescent’s actions, and likewise, makes inferences about the parent’s behavior.

Cognitively, the early adolescent is still thinking in concrete, egocentric terms. Cognitive development is an on-going process, marked by fluctuation. At times the young adolescent will amaze parents with a mature ability to handle a difficult situation. The next time, however, the child may respond with an emotional outburst. This type of fluctuation makes it difficult for the parent to both respond and interact with the adolescent, as they may dread the possible outcome. Children alike, may not understand their fluctuating ability to manage their emotions and blame the parent for their feelings. These patterns of interaction during early adolescence reinforce parent and adolescent relationship theories.

Another aspect of the pre-teen’s cognitive development is the dialectic tension between separateness and connectedness. This contributes to an ongoing theme of misunderstanding between family members, in part because of the difficult nature of managing associated tension between involvement and separateness. The age of early adolescents necessitates continued reliance on the parent for emotional and physical support (i.e., food, clothing, and housing); however, the adolescent also desires to have more control over his own decision-making process. The adolescent is then placed in a

dialectical situation where both independence and continued support are desired (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Harter, 1990). Substantial increases in conflict and ambivalence follow for early adolescents, exemplified in rebellious attitudes and repeated attempts to re-negotiate with parents. This process again reinforces parent and child lay theories of adolescence. Based on parent and adolescent interaction goals being very different, a theme of misunderstanding is reinforced.

Parents typically view adolescence, and particularly early adolescence, as the most difficult interval of parenting, feeling a loss of control over the child and fearing for their child's safety because of his or her increased independence (Pasley & Gecas, 1984; Small, Cornelius, & Eastman, 1983). Rapid physical growth, preoccupation with body image, conformity, and beginning emotional breaks from parents, characterize the difficult changes encountered in early adolescence.

Middle Adolescence. Middle adolescence is a time of continuing social and cognitive development. As compared with early adolescence, these teens are less preoccupied with their physical change but still very conscious of their body image. The peer group expands during this stage of adolescence to include the opposite sex (Feldman & Elliot, 1990), which continues to strengthen self-concept and resolve body image dilemmas by gaining acceptance within the peer group. The influence of the peer group and continuing cognitive development provide a continuing source of conflict as parent and adolescent negotiate the difficult passageway.

The peer group is an important domain of emotional security particularly as the teen separates from parents. Peers foster individuation/identity development by providing

relationships and acceptance outside the family, since friendship is voluntary and affords an alternative sense of connectedness (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Increased independence combined with an expanding group of friends result in less interest and involvement with family (Noller & Callan, 1990). This developmental aspect of adolescence provides one of the most pervasive themes of misunderstanding within adolescent families. Parents, in particular, struggle to accept the increasing influence of the peer group, as well as the youth's choice-making.

Cognitively, middle adolescence is marked by fluctuation between concrete and abstract thinking. This gives rise to on-going conflict as parents incorrectly assess from which domain the child is speaking or relating. Where concrete thinking helps the adolescent talk about specific matters, abstract thinking allows the adolescent to evaluate, expound and summarize his or her thoughts. This fluctuation may impair parental judgments about conversation tactics. For instance, a child thinking in a concrete mode is more likely to report the most obvious conclusions, whereas the adolescent who is thinking abstractly may analyze or summarize with his or her own observations. This incongruence is likely to cause dissatisfaction with either party who is not feeling heard or with the child who disagrees with parental expectations. Again, this is an area that feeds lay relationship theories of both parents and adolescents.

Social and cognitive change also give rise to conflict occurring in this stage. As middle adolescents continue to individuate from parents, they move toward more intimate relationships. Sexual experimentation and a perceived sense of invulnerability/reality testing characterize sociocognitive development and are a serious concern for parents.

Parents often feel a strong need to guide the adolescent during this stage; however, that tactic will likely incite the very behavior it is intended to mitigate. Thus, cognitive and sociocognitive development will require parents and adolescents to negotiate power and authority, further contributing to themes of family misunderstanding.

Middle adolescents develop a more secure sense of identity, choice-making, and independence. Their ability to think abstractly increases, but still fluctuates; preoccupation with body image decreases; the peer group includes heterosexual relationships; and, some may show an interest in planning for the future, but their focus remains narcissistic. These developments describe the cognitive, behavioral, and psychological attainment of the adolescents who participated in this study.

The life stage of adolescence can be thought of as a period of growth and development on a number of dimensions. The developmental tasks associated with each substage of adolescence provide a framework for continued psychological and social growth throughout a lifetime. The conflict associated with this period also contributes to adolescent development. Adolescents learn to negotiate, manage their emotions, and problem-solve; however, these lessons come at a time that is sometimes difficult for reasons other than adolescent development alone.

The Parenting Experience

The preceding discussion of adolescent development and conflict reveals many areas of potential disagreement and misunderstanding. Research in the area of parent-adolescent communication is generally unidirectional rather than bi-directional in assessing impact of the relationship. There is prolific research considering how parental

communication impacts adolescent outcomes such as self-esteem, competence, and delinquency (Baumrind, 1991; Paulson, 1994; Mullis, Mullis, & Normandin, 1992). To develop a fuller appreciation of how the period of adolescence fosters family conflict and misunderstanding, however, we must look at how parents are impacted by changes in their self-concept and the developmental changes of their adolescent children, as well their own psychological adjustment.

Adolescence arrives at a time in many parents' lives when they may be experiencing their own type of "identity crisis." Some may experience doubt in their choice of career or marital partner; others may be dissatisfied with parenting roles and abilities; others may be ready to enjoy a calmer lifestyle after pressing through their twenties or thirties, only to face an onslaught of change within their family system. For many reasons, parents of adolescents may simultaneously experience disappointment or a deficiency in their once robust concept of self. Levinson and associates (1978) studied the adult life cycle and discovered alternating periods of stability with periods of transition. Periods of transition were often marked by turmoil and reawakening of unresolved issues and tended to coincide with children's transition to adolescence. This idea lends credence to the view presented here that parents of adolescents experience their own degree of uncertainty during this stage of life.

The adolescent unknowingly contributes to parental uncertainty in a number of ways. A primary concern for parents of adolescents is the adjustment of letting go, granting the necessary autonomy (Montemayor, 1983; Pasley & Gecas, 1984; Small, Cornelius & Eastman 1983). As adolescents embrace their budding sexual identity,

parents must reckon with the changing interpersonal relationships as well as their own sexuality (Kidwell, Fischer, Dunham, & Baranowski, 1983). As adolescents look ahead, plan for their future, and optimistically survey the opportunities life has in store for them, parents look back and evaluate the goals they have achieved and the opportunities they have seized. Often, parent and adolescent are looking at life from opposite angles, which can be a great source of tension. Also, the adolescent questions parental values and beliefs at a time when the parent may also be questioning some of their own beliefs and values. These are the subtle undercurrents that stimulate parent-adolescent interaction. Other actions may be more intentional.

Negotiating for control and decision-making often involve overt tactics on the part of the adolescent. This pattern of communication between parents and adolescents is likely to surprise the parent who is not prepared for their child's non-compliance. According to Stone and Church (1968), "readiness for adulthood comes about two years later than the adolescent claims and about two years before the parent will admit" (p. 447, as cited in Noller, 1995). Parents become increasingly aware of their lack of control over both their advancing age and the choices made by their children. Where rules and regulations used to provide structure and control for the child, they now provide a forum for both sides to debate who should have the control. This is a debate that parents often lose, partly because adolescence is a period of renegotiating relationships with parents (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), which forces parents to concede some changes, as well the adolescent must also. Instead of making sound judgments in favor of the child's best interest, parents must listen to the child's needs and demands and determine how they can

maintain some influence and simultaneously allow the child to be responsible for some of his or her own decision-making. Parenting techniques that may have worked well through childhood, are now inadequate to deal with adolescent cognitive and identity development.

As parents face a juncture in their own life, coupled with the challenges adolescence freely provide, parental self-concepts can become tenuous just as the adolescent's identity is experiencing change and growth. Adolescent negativity, arguing and distancing behaviors may impact parental self-concept (Demo, Small & Savin-Williams, 1987). These authors contend that intra familial communication is related to both parent and adolescent self-esteem. Further, family communication is likely to be limited during adolescence, as the teen is focused on individuating from the parent, rather than relating or communicating. Also, adolescents avoid discussing many topics with parents (Noller & Callan, 1990). On the other hand, impact of family communication, or lack thereof, on the parental self-concept is mitigated by having many other bases for support, including spouses, social position, career, and extra-familial relationships (Demo, et al, 1987).

Parents are likely to be substantially impacted by the realization of their own stage in the life cycle, role negotiation with the adolescent, and changes in self-concept during the period of adolescence. As suggested, it is not only the adolescent who faces difficult adjustments during this stage of life. There are many reasons for stress or conflict during adolescence.

The previous discussion of adolescent development and the parenting experience provide insight into the conflict that exists in the adolescent family. The many tasks that

must be learned during adolescence create a challenge to which the child must adapt.

Likewise, parents react to the developments of their child as well as adapt to changes in their own life. This modification of the family system alters communication patterns, illuminates differences, and changes alliances. Thus, we have a foundation to discuss themes of family misunderstanding that develop based on changes that have taken place. These themes generate lay theories to which both parent and adolescent turn when they experience uncertainty in their relationship. It is through this lens that we will look more closely at themes of misunderstanding within the parent–adolescent relationship.

Themes of Parent–Adolescent Misunderstanding

Conflict between parents and adolescents seems to be predictable and thematic rather than general or all-encompassing. Based on this discussion of lay theories, it seems likely that the thematic nature of this conflict will be reflected in lay theories that shape perception within relationships. To anticipate how well parents and adolescents understand each other in conflict conversation, it is helpful to look at these themes in light of the social and cognitive developmental state of adolescents. We will now narrow this review to look at themes of conflict that both shape and perpetuate lay relationship theories of parents and adolescents. We will examine three sources of parent–adolescent conflict from extant research on adolescence: the "storm and stress" of adolescence, a peer versus family orientation, and fluctuating cognitive capability.

Storm and Stress. One of the long-standing debates concerning adolescence is the extent to which it is a period of conflict and stress for families of adolescents. G. Stanley Hall (1904), who launched the study of adolescence in the field of psychology, first

described this period as a time of "storm and stress," and of passion and rebellion against adult authority (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Conger, 1981; Ellis, 1986). It is generally perceived as more stressful than preceding or subsequent stages of life. This review provides a foundation from which to view parental theories of their adolescent's behavior, assuming that this is one of the factors influencing parental attributions to their children.

The view of adolescence as being a turbulent period of time has been fostered by psychoanalytical and clinical perspectives of family relations (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Dornbusch, 1989; Steinberg, 1987). There are many different explanations for the turmoil associated with this life stage, including the adolescent's identity crisis (Erikson, 1968), rapid social change, particularly within contemporary American society (Clausen, 1986; Simmons & Blyth, 1987; Rice, 1975), lack of interpersonal skills to cope with the change necessary to move toward greater independence (Hartup, 1979; Montemayor, 1983), and the experience of parents during this time.

Other researchers in the social sciences discount the extent to which adolescence is stressful and conflict-laden (Conger, 1981; Offer, Ostrava and Howard, 1981; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). This research suggests that adolescence is not an overly tumultuous time for adolescents; that parent-adolescent relations reflect both harmony and conflict; that adolescent self-esteem does not necessarily decline; and that, adolescents identify with and like their parents (Gecas & Seff, 1990). A study by Offer and Sabshin (1984) takes a more realistic stance on this issue. They claim that 21 percent of a large sample of teenagers experienced a tumultuous, conflict-laden adolescence, while roughly the same number experience very few problems. About 35 percent moved through this period in an

up and down manner associated with levels of both their confidence and family conflict. These findings more accurately reflect common perceptions of the adolescent life stage.

One explanation for the common perception of stress during adolescence is history and social change. Whereas the research cited above discounts adolescence as a stressful period of time, Sebald (1986) has found an interesting curvilinear pattern in family relations. With samples of high school students taken in 1963, 1976, and 1982, Sebald found the highest levels of identification and closeness with parents, as well as parental influence, in 1963. These indicators then declined substantially in the seventies and began increasing again in the eighties. Sebald explains this pattern in terms of social change reflected by the conservatism of the 1960s and 1980s and the volatility associated with events of the 1970s, such as the Vietnam war, the counterculture movement, rioting and protests. This pattern suggests that from a sociological point of view, the historical context shapes negativity and volatility during adolescence, but it does not further explain how the ongoing nature of interaction between parent and adolescent consistently exhibits some degree of conflict.

The "generational stake" hypothesis (Bengston & Kuyper, 1971), provides an explanation for the "storm and stress" of this period. This hypothesis bases conflict associated with adolescence on an increased level of negativity attributed to the adolescent. Research supporting the generational stake hypothesis posits that where parents have a stake in maximizing the similarities between themselves and adolescents, adolescents minimize the similarities (Bengston & Kuyper, 1971; Noller & Callan, 1988). Each generation views family interaction in terms of its own particular bias, with neither

parent nor adolescent providing accurate accounts of family life.

Niemi (1968) concluded that, although neither parents nor adolescents provided objective accounts, adolescents were possibly better reporters of what was really happening in the family. This contention was more recently supported in a study by Noller and Callan (1988) where they measured the perceptions of parents and adolescents within one family and compared them with an outside family's ratings. They found that the insider family adolescent adopted a more negative view than his or her parents and one more similar to that of the outsider family parents. It is possible that outsider families may adopt a more negative view of insider families, just as insider parents may embrace a more positive view of their family interactions, as motivated by a sense of personal investment in their own families. Due to many years spent nurturing and guiding their children, parents have a high level of investment in how their family is perceived. This parental stake is based on social desirability. Stated otherwise, the parents' desire to look good as a family or as parents, compels them to rate their children as more similar to themselves in values than perhaps they are. Adolescents, on the other hand, tend to be less invested in family relationships and are more likely to minimize the similarities to further their sense of independence and separateness.

Perceived negativity is likewise based on the child's stake of becoming more independent. As adolescents seek to be less dependent on the family, they become less involved and less interested in the happenings of the family. As this change occurs, the adolescents' perspective becomes more like that of outsiders, with lower levels of investment in the family than parents (Noller & Callan, 1991). Further, Bengston and

Kuypers (1971) point out that adolescents are highly motivated to create their own attitudes and ideologies, with their own values and lifestyles. In contrast, parents are seeking validation for the values they have used to guide their lives and their children's. The necessity of these divergent goals, gives way to differing viewpoints and family conflict.

A further implication of the generational stake hypothesis is that the emotions of adolescents are likely to be displayed in a negative manner and parents are therefore, more likely to attribute or infer negative thoughts to the child regardless of what he or she may be thinking. The generational stake is likely to fuel conflict associated with this period because of differing motivations of parent and child and the negativity associated with adolescence. In actuality, the types of disagreement typically found are in areas of curfew, friends, music, and dress, rather than basic family values.

Considering the discussion of storm and stress, it seems less productive to debate the extent of turmoil than to focus on what we can observe and understand about it. It is readily apparent in our American culture, that there is conflict between parents and adolescents, whether limited to minor disagreement over curfew or music, or more intense conflict over divergent values. Changes occurring in the family system are likely to produce stress.

Parents and Friends. Another common theme pertaining to parent-adolescent conflict is the competition for investment or involvement between parents, adolescents and peers (Noller & Callan, 1991; Gecas & Seff, 1990). Contemporary adolescence has been viewed in a context of weakened family ties and of more powerful peer pressure, but this

view doesn't adequately account for the structure of parental and peer relationships.

Parents are not perceived with the same expectation of understanding accorded to peers partly because friends share personal knowledge and *build* a common perspective. Also, friends are perceived to have a mutual concern for one another based on their common perspective, whereas the concern that parents have for their adolescent child is seen as emerging from the parent's role and responsibility (Youniss & Smoller, 1985). The parental role is structured differently from that of friends in the level of agreement conferred by the adolescent. Friends expect they will agree with each other more than with their parents. Where friendships are based on individuality, acceptance, and choice, the family is based on connectedness (i.e., "you can't choose your family").

Peer relationships also offer a valuable component to the development of the adolescent. Research shows that, because they are distinct relationships, differently structured and with different benefits, parental influence does not wane (Bulcroft, 1991). Rather, peers become influential in areas of dress, music, and similar areas rather than core values (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1986; Gecas & Seff, 1990). Research shows that most adolescents think highly of their parents, value their parent's opinion, and go to their parents for advice and assistance with personal problems (Kandel & Lesser, 1972). In fact, some research suggests that peer influence takes over only when parents abdicate the responsibility (see Noller & Callan, 1991). So, although adolescents become more peer-oriented, they are also concerned with maintaining the love and support of their parents.

In fact, adolescents perceive themselves and their parents as being more congruent on values than they actually are. Although adolescents indicate that they have similar

values, as well as positive, supportive relationships with parents, there is considerable dissimilarity when parents and adolescents are surveyed independently. Studies measuring the actual values of both adolescent and parent found little congruence (Gecas & Seff, 1990). Interestingly, adolescents overrate the similarities between themselves and parents when reporting on their values. It is apparent that although it is a difficult period of re-negotiation for both parents and adolescents, the family relationship remains an important component in the adolescents', as well as the parents', life.

Cognitive Development and Fluctuation. In contrast to the observable trend of adolescent conflict, cognitive development subtly impacts communication and conflict between parents and adolescents. Early adolescents still thinking in concrete, egocentric terms, find it difficult to understand the continuing parental duty to guide or control their actions (Keating, 1990). On the other hand, as children move into middle adolescence, there is increasing fluctuation between the concrete/abstract dimensions. Cognitive fluctuations also appear in the form of an unpredictable adolescent. In many ways, cognitive fluctuation impacts the way adolescents communicate with their family.

This family communication pattern becomes a theme of misunderstanding due to the amount of conflict this fluctuation may cause. For instance, adolescents can change within minutes from acting mature and adult-like to throwing childish temper tantrums or from thinking concretely to more abstract thinking. Concrete thinking permits the adolescent to listen to parental instruction or discussion and more readily accept their message. The ability to think abstractly allows adolescents to see rules as arbitrary, and have the ability to take other perspectives. As their ability to think abstractly is enhanced,

so is their ability to hypothesize and argue effectively. This skill seems to contribute to family conflict by becoming, at times, the primary mode of communication. By way of example, consider a mother responding to her daughter's request to help find something to wear. The mother makes a suggestion, the daughter then disagrees with her mother's choice and selects something else. Adolescent thought processes can be problematic to family functioning.

Cognitive fluctuation also allows adolescents to begin theorizing about both family and friend relationships. This has many implications for family conflict. Adolescents typically arrive at a place where family comparison becomes an essential conversation tactic. For example, consider a parent and child who are discussing the family ritual of opening presents on Christmas Eve. The youth has become aware that many of his friends' families open their presents first thing Christmas morning. He decides that his family should also open presents in the morning, that this approach is somehow superior because that is the way other families do it. He then lobbies each family member, reasoning that everybody does it this way. When it is not accepted, it somehow reflects poorly on him and he becomes angry. As you can see, this trend of thinking corresponds with other developments that are co-occurring (i.e., peer similarity and acceptance). Again, this is an area that feeds lay relationship theories of both parents and adolescents.

These themes of parent-adolescent conflict point to general and specific lay relationship theories. The thematic nature also reveals how the developments of the life stage are intertwined with the experience of parents and communication in the family. At this point we will turn to specific study of family communication and apply the theoretical

notions we have described above in terms adolescent family research.

Family Communication Research

Study of understanding between family members has been fairly limited. As stated, attention focuses more often on marital or dating relationships. This leaves out an important segment of communication study. I have shown how this life stage presents interaction dilemmas and tensions not faced at any other time in life. In 1988, Noller and Callan stated "There is a growing recognition among family researchers that the responses of multiple families are needed, rather than the perceptions of single family members" (p. 707). Considering the long range implications for decisions made during adolescence, studying the communication patterns of parents and their children is overdue. Particular authors have laid the groundwork for this study. We will now review some of this work.

In 1988, Noller and Callan acted on their own recommendation and studied perception from within the family triad of father, mother, child, as well as from the outside. Outsider families and a trained observer judged the interactions of the videotaped families, just as the families judged themselves, and rated communication between them on 6 dimensions. Results indicated that outsider families tended to be more negative in their perceptions than the insider families. Although the ratings of the outsider family member were more highly correlated with the trained observer, a comparison of the means shows the trained observer's ratings to be similar in magnitude to those of the insider family. Further, even though ratings by the adolescent were similar to those of the outsider family, they were very different from the trained observer's; and the correlational data show little relation between adolescents' ratings and those of the outside observers. Examination of

the fathers' and mothers' ratings of each other, correlated with the outside family and the trained observer, results indicate a nonexistent or negative relationship. Overall, results show family members, particularly parents, as being more objective in rating themselves than other family members. These findings emphasize the importance of examining the patterns of ratings and the different perspectives, in studies of this type (Noller & Callan, 1988).

In another more recent study (see Sillars, Koerner, Fitzpatrick, & Kampen, 1998) researchers consider parent-adolescent understanding in two domains: the understanding judged by the "on-line" thoughts of both parents and adolescent, and, the understanding as measured by questionnaire items. Results indicated that during family discussion, family members had little understanding of what others were thinking. Fathers had significantly less understanding of their children than any other family member combination. Additionally, family communication patterns, as measured by the Revised Family Communication Patterns (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1990) instrument, did not predict understanding of on-line thoughts. Further, there was no association between relationship satisfaction and understanding of family members' thoughts.

On the other hand, when family understanding was measured using the Areas of Change Questionnaire (Jacob & Seilhamer, 1985), a different pattern of results emerged. Overall, family members showed a moderate level of understanding with regard to changes desired by other family members. Parents' understanding of the changes desired by adolescents was significantly higher than adolescents' understanding of the changes desired by parents. The differences in these measures indicate that they tap separate

dimensions of family understanding. Taken together however, understanding of desired change was positively associated with family conformity-orientation. This suggests that the highest levels of parent–adolescent understanding were accomplished through parental enforcement of conformity, rather than by an open exchange of ideas (Sillars, et al, 1998). However, family conformity-orientation and parent–adolescent understanding of desired change were negatively correlated with parent–adolescent relationship satisfaction. Family conversation-orientation, however, was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction.

These results indicate that conformity-oriented families achieved higher levels of understanding in some areas, but parents and children were more satisfied with their relationship when perspectives were more freely expressed and loosely understood. This study points out some of the difficulty involved with assessing the multiple domains of understanding within relationships.

Hypotheses

Based on this past research, there exists a need to examine communication between parents and adolescents, as it shapes perceptions of family members. One of the most dominant trends in this research is the idea that adolescence is typically associated with an increase in family conflict. As was pointed out in the preceding literature review, parents and adolescents each have a stake in how the family is perceived. Because parents exert so much of themselves into raising a family, they hope their family will be seen in a positive light. On the other hand, children want to be seen as separate from their family and independent, and think parents are trying to control their actions and choices. Based on the literature introduced, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H₁ Fathers and mothers will attribute more negative thoughts to children than children report for themselves.
- H₂ Fathers and mothers will report more positive thoughts than children report thinking.
- H₃ Children will attribute more solution and imperative thoughts to parents than parents report thinking.
- H₄ Fathers and mothers will report more engaged conversation behavior for themselves than children will report for themselves.
- H₅ Children will attribute less engaged conversation behavior to parents than parents report thinking.

The process of separation from parents and a move toward peer identification gives rise to another potential source of misunderstanding. It can be difficult for family members to negotiate differing expectations as children want to identify more closely with their peers yet still depend on parents for emotional and physical support. As parents and adolescents become more polarized, parents see each other as more similar and adolescents see their peers as more similar. The following hypotheses arise from this area of research.

- H₆ Parents will attribute more agreement to each other than to their children.
- H₇ Children will attribute less knowing of what parents are thinking than parents will attribute to children.

Fluctuating cognitive ability leads to another source of conflict in adolescent families. During early adolescence children's thinking drifts from concrete to abstract and back and forth. As children proceed through adolescence, they are increasingly capable of

more complex thought processes. However, the domain of adolescent thinking varies greatly, which can lead to increased misunderstanding. The following hypothesis is derived from this reasoning.

H₈ Fathers and mothers will attribute more process thoughts and fewer issue appraisal thoughts to children than children report for themselves.

These hypotheses should clarify our understanding of the misunderstanding that prevails during this life stage. Following is a discussion of the methodology used to gather and study data in a valid and reliable manner.

Methods

Fifty families, each including a mother, father, and adolescent child, participated in the research. Consenting families came to a university research lab where they held a family discussion and provided reports while viewing a videotape of their discussion.

Sampling

Families were recruited for the research by telephone. A simple random sample was selected from a comprehensive phone list of children attending public middle-schools in a medium-size, Midwestern, U.S. city. Families were first sent an informational letter and then contacted by telephone. The letter explained the purpose of the study and described basic procedures, such as the location of the study, time required, compensation, and activities involved. Families were offered \$40 for their participation. Phone interviewers asked to speak with one parent and followed a phone script. The following criteria were used to qualify families for the research: 1) All three family members (two parents and adolescent child) gave voluntary consent to participate; 2) Both parents participating in the study were directly involved in the child's upbringing; 3) The adolescent child spent at least 50% of his or her time in the household of the parent who was contacted; 4) All family members were fluent in English. Parents could include stepparents or unmarried partners residing in the same household. Single-parent families were excluded from the research. We did not directly exclude same-sex parents, but there were no same-sex parents in the sample. Phone calls were conducted at variable times and interviewers made three attempts to contact a family before replacing them in the sample.

Phone interviews continued until the target number of fifty consenting families was achieved.

Participants

Fifty families participated in the study. The mean age was 42 for mothers (SD = 4.4) and 43 for fathers (SD = 5.0). Eighty-six percent of mothers and 78% of fathers had not been involved in a previous marriage. Children in the study were all between the ages of 11 – 14 and attending middle school (grades 6-8). There were 22 daughters and 28 sons. Despite the use of random sampling methods, the sample was predominantly Caucasian, well educated, and mid to upper income. Ninety-two percent of mothers and 94% of fathers were Caucasian. Sixty percent of mothers and 74% of fathers had earned a college degree (B.A. or B.S.). Twenty-two percent of mothers and 52% of fathers had completed a post graduate degree. Seventy-four percent of the sample had a household income of fifty thousand dollars or greater (as reported by mothers). In part, these demographics reflect the location of the research, which is home to both the state capital and a large public university, thus attracting a large number of career professionals. In addition, there were a number of single-parent families and non-English speakers who were excluded from the study, thus increasing the homogeneity of the sample.

Procedures

Appointments were scheduled with families during evenings and weekends over a four month period. Family members came to the research lab together and spent approximately 1½ hours at the lab. Three research assistants were present at each appointment. Upon arriving at the lab, family members received an orientation to the

research and signed consent forms. Parents and children signed separate forms, the child's form being a simplified version of the parents' form. During the orientation period family members were informed that they would each complete questionnaires about topics that cause disagreements in families and participate in a discussion about these topics, which would be videotaped. The family was also told that each person would watch the videotape later and answer questions about it. Finally, family members were advised that their responses to questionnaires and videotapes would be confidential, other family members would not see their responses, and they could decide to stop participating in the research at any time. Each family member completed two questionnaires, one prior to the discussion and one afterwards. The pre-discussion questionnaire elicited perceptions of parent-adolescent conflicts, whereas the post-discussion questionnaire measured family communication patterns, relationship satisfaction, demographics, and other variables. The post-discussion questionnaires were used in the initial analysis of data discussed previously (Sillars, et al, 1998). Each family member was escorted to a separate, private room to complete the questionnaires. Upon completion of the pre-discussion questionnaire, family members were brought together in a common room with lounge chairs and a coffee table arranged to resemble a living room. A video camera was concealed in an adjacent, darkened room. Although the camera was not visible, family members were aware that they would be videotaped. The family was left alone for a brief period without specific instructions to allow them to acclimate to the setting. Subsequently, the research assistant returned, explained the discussion task, and again left the room.

The family was given a list of eight topics that represent typical areas of

disagreement between parents and adolescents. These discussion topics covered the same issues that were included in the pre-discussion questionnaire. The discussion topics are as follows.

- The amount of time you spend together as a family.
- Getting chores done on time without hassles.
- Giving criticism or showing appreciation to one another.
- How much money the son/daughter receives and how it is spent.
- Getting homework done, giving help with schoolwork, or showing interest in homework.
- The amount of time the son/daughter spends with friends and/or how parents react to friends.
- Listening to one another and showing respect.
- The amount of responsibility and freedom given to the son/daughter.

Each family member chose one of these issues for discussion. Families were asked to talk about the three issues one at a time, including: 1) whether each topic represented an area of disagreement; 2) how it was affecting the three family members; and 3) what they can do to solve the problem. The family was asked to discuss the topics in a particular order, determined by the seating position of the family members. Seating position was randomly assigned by the research assistant. The discussion was interrupted after 15 minutes.

Immediately following the discussion, family members were directed to separate rooms, accompanied by a research assistant. Here they watched a videotape of the discussion and responded to questions. The same video signal, controlled from a single

location, was shown simultaneously in the three rooms. Every 90 seconds the videotape was paused and family members were asked to report what they were thinking at that point in the discussion (direct perspective) and what they believed the other two family members were thinking (meta-perspectives). These procedures were modeled after Icke's method for assessing empathic accuracy (Ickes & Tooke, 1988), with some adaptation to coordinate the reports of three (rather than two) persons. Reports from video replay sessions were later transcribed and coded to reveal understanding of discussion thoughts. Before leaving the research lab, family members completed a second questionnaire, again in separate rooms. They were then brought together, debriefed, and dismissed.

Coding Procedures

The transcribed thoughts were then unitized and arranged into a consistent table format with direct perspectives in one column, meta-perspectives in another column, and a space in between to write the codes (see Appendix A). The total number of units was 4,500: 1,500 direct perspectives and 3,000 meta-perspectives. Due to recording and transcribing errors, 360 units of video assisted recall were missing. The number of units available for this study was then 4,140.

The coding process began with the help of a team of four undergraduate coders who worked with the author to inductively develop a series of codes that reflected the family members' thoughts. The process of developing the coding scheme included reviewing the current literature and studying a sample of the transcribed data. Thus, the codes reflect both trends in the family discussions and current literature. The coding manual was loosely based on a coding manual previously developed for study of video

recall of marital interaction (see Sillars, Dun, and Roberts, 1999).

The coding scheme was designed to reveal the perceptions of adolescent family members during a discussion of conflict. Four aspects of interpersonal communication are used to broadly distinguish the categories for specific codes: emotion, issue appraisal, person appraisal, and process/strategy. A total of 18 specific codes were developed during a six-week training period (see Figure 1). The coding scheme went through many iterations until the 5-person coding team could consistently apply the coding rules and maintain a high level of agreement. See Appendix B for a thorough read of the coding manual that guided this process.

After this training period, the percentage of agreement for the 5-person coding team was 78%. The 50 family transcripts were then distributed to each of the 5 coders, 10 transcripts per person. Coding of the transcripts took place over the following 6 week period of time, during which, reliability was assessed on a bi-weekly basis to monitor for drift and decay. A total of 300 units were tested for intercoder agreement over the 6-week coding period. The percentage of agreement varied from week to week from 69%-88%; average agreement was 75%. Reliability was conservatively assessed using a random sampling of several different family transcripts. On the other hand, each family transcript was coded as a unit by one coder, providing more context for the coder to draw from. The codes were then entered into a database for analysis. The results of those analyses will be discussed fully in the following sections.

Figure 1

Guide to Thematic Codes and Descriptions

Emotion

- Positive Explicitly stating a positive emotion.
--I'm happy...She's proud of herself...He's excited.
- Negative Explicitly stating a negative emotion.
--I'm sad...He's feeling depressed...She's feeling guilty.

Issue Appraisal

- Elaboration Talking about objectifiable issues, thinking about the topic of conversation in neutral manner. Does not fit in a specific appraisal subcategory.
--I was thinking about some of the television shows I watch..
- Likes Describing topic or issues in positive manner.
--It was fun to go somewhere with just my parents...I like to do things with my family.
- Dislikes Describing topic or issues in negative manner.
--It makes it a little more of a hassle that way.
- Agreement Discussing similarity of opinions or feelings.
--We were seeing eye-to-eye...She was thinking the same thing I was.
- Disagreement Indicating dissimilarity or incongruence of opinion or feeling.
--I don't agree with him...She was thinking she didn't agree with us.
- Solution Talking directly or indirectly about working toward a solution.
--He's thinking about where he's going to get the shelves (shelves are the solution).

Person Appraisal

- Complaint Expressing pain or dissatisfaction with other. Statements of criticism, fault-finding, or annoyance.
--She's always trying to get in a little more t.v...
- Imperative Stating what someone (other than self) should or should not do.
--They need to be here for dinner...She should be a little stricter about telling me to...
- Admission Accepting responsibility for actions or problem. Can include self-criticism.
--She should be a little less critical of Karen.

Strategy/Process

- Engagement Discussing a group process, no singling out, where 2 or more family members are working together (no blaming).
--Should we be looking at some resolution? She was listening to the problem.
- Avoidance Intentionally shifting the focus from self or what is going on, lying, not answering, or making excuses.
--I don't want to talk about it...She's not telling the truth.
- Confrontation Negatively directed to other participants, taking a negative stance, blaming, defending self or other.
--I was thinking about defending Karen...
- Confusion Statements indicating lack of understanding by speaker--can be indicated by not finishing thoughts, interrupting self, multiple verbalized pauses (ah, um), listing multiple perspectives.
--I'm not sure what he is saying...I am, uh, I don't know, maybe...
- Process Referring to the function (not the topic) of the current conversation. Does not fit into any other process category.
--I had been talking to her about tolerance being the word...okay, I got through this.

Other

- Don't Know Coder does not have a perspective statement for that unit.
- Uncodeable No perspective is given, statement is unclear.
-

Results

Descriptive Characteristics of Thoughts During Video Assisted Recall

The distribution of thought codes reveals some basic characteristics of cognition during conflict oriented conversation between parents and adolescent children. Table 1 presents the percentages of each thought code and summary category and gives examples of each code. First, the results document the extent to which these individuals attended to emotions during their videotaped discussions. Although many of the reported thoughts contained an emotional tone, such as boredom, irritation, or contentment, only 6 percent of the codes verbally articulated an emotion as the direct object of awareness. Second, about one half of the reported thoughts (49%) were coded in the issue appraisal category which indicates that family members spent a comparatively large amount of time talking about objectifiable issues associated with the content level of the discussion. Third, about 12% of verbalized thoughts were coded as person appraisals, reflecting a relatively small portion of thoughts regarding the parents, the adolescent or their relationships. Lastly, one quarter of the reported thoughts (24%) were process codes suggesting that even though their thoughts were not necessarily directed toward their relationships, they were attending to and strategizing about the communication process at hand.

Together, person appraisal codes and process codes reflected family members' attention to implicit relationship issues and the strategies used in discussing conflict-oriented topics. They combine for more than a third of all coded thoughts (36%). Although person appraisal codes and process codes both reflect relationship issues, they differ in regard to

TABLE 1

Percentage of occurrence and representative examples for parent-adolescent thought

codes

CATEGORY	EXAMPLE
Emotion (6%)	
positive emotions (3%)	<i>I appreciated Marny going to bat for that issue.</i>
negative emotions (3%)	<i>I'm feeling a little bit sad.</i>
Issue Appraisal (49%)	
elaboration (22%)	<i>I usually get the chores done.</i>
likes (6%)	<i>I did a pretty good job.</i>
dislikes (6%)	<i>I wish it didn't have to be so complicated, that life could be simple.</i>
agreement (9%)	<i>She's thinking the same thing.</i>
disagreement (3%)	<i>He'd really rather be with his friends.</i>
solution (4%)	<i>How are we gonna get this done?</i>
Person Appraisal (13%)	
complaint (6%)	<i>He was thinking...if I tried harder I could do more.</i>
imperative (4%)	<i>She was thinking I should be more outgoing.</i>
admission (3%)	<i>If I really tried, I could do everything.</i>
Process (24%)	
engagement (11%)	<i>I could understand what my mom was saying.</i>
avoidance (2%)	<i>Rather than getting mad I get up and leave.</i>
confrontation (3%)	<i>How can this not make sense? How difficult can this be?</i>
confusion (1%)	<i>Um, I wasn't sure what my dad was saying, um...</i>
general process (7%)	<i>How could he convince us...</i>
Other (9%)	
not knowing (5%)	<i>I don't know what she's thinking.</i>
unclear (5%)	<i>The fact that I really didn't have to go that day...</i>

time orientation and level of abstraction (Sillars, et al, 1999). Process codes refer to specific events or behaviors within the interaction; whereas, person appraisal codes indicate more abstract assessments of person and relationship characteristics that transcend the situation at hand. Thus, parents and adolescents seemed to attend more consciously to the immediate communication process than think abstractly about the person or relationship.

Finally, participants seemed engaged in the task at hand and did not show obvious difficulty reconstructing the tone and content of previous conversations. This is shown by the comparatively small percentage of reported thoughts coded as “not knowing” (5%). Another 5% of perspectives were coded as unclear or uncodeable, as the responses given did not give a clear or codeable perspective statement. Table 2 presents an analysis of thematic codes.

Table 2

Number of Responses by Thematic Domain

Domain	Number of Responses	
	<u>n</u>	Percent
Emotion	229	5.6 %
Issue Appraisal	2024	48.9 %
Person Appraisal	505	12.2 %
Process	979	23.6 %
Not Knowing	195	4.7%
Unclear	208	5.0%
Total	4140	100.0%

Emotion. The first thematic domain, emotion, contains two subcategories: positive

and negative. The number of codes in each subcategory was nearly equal (see Table 1). The positive category contained 47% reported emotions (i.e., “I did a pretty good job,” “he’s content with the way things are,” or “I just feel lucky that my kids are responsible”). Likewise, 53% of reported emotions were in the negative emotion subcategory. Examples of negative thoughts or attributions are: “the family time issue, um, makes me feel a little guilty,” or “he’s concerned,” or “I was kinda angry.” The general tone of emotion throughout this study reflected more mildness than heated conflict.

Issue Appraisal. The coding scheme identified issue appraisals as all thoughts that are not tied to communication behaviors, but to the content level of the discussion. This thematic domain is defined by six subcategories. The most commonly reported code of the issue appraisal category, and of all categories in fact, was elaboration. Neutral elaborations comprised nearly half (44%) of all thoughts coded as issue appraisals. Statements in this subcategory included: “[that] I usually get my chores done,” *meta-perspective*; and “he’s probably thinking about, uhh... about rock climbing in Devil’s Lake,” *meta-perspective*. Children reported significantly more elaboration thoughts than either fathers or mothers reported for self ($t = 2.95, p < .01, t = 3.82, p < .001$, respectively). Children also attributed more elaboration thoughts to mothers and fathers than mothers or fathers attributed to spouses or children.

The second most commonly reported code in the issue appraisal category was agreement (17.7%). Agreement included thoughts such as “I’m sure he agrees,” *direct perspective*; “we were of similar minds,” *direct perspective*; and “[that] the old man had a point,” *meta-perspective*. Mothers and fathers attributed significantly more agreement to

their spouses than either reported for themselves ($t = 6.4, p < .001, t = 5.52, p < .001$, respectively). Adolescents also attributed significantly more agreement to mothers and fathers than the adolescent reported for self ($t = 5.06, p < .001, t = 5.36, p < .001$, respectively). Disagreement was the least reported code of all issue appraisals (5.8%), a surprising result considering the context of this study was conflict conversation.

Person Appraisal. The coding scheme identified person appraisals as thoughts representing an evaluation of the person or relationship. This domain was comprised of three codes. Responses coded as complaint accounted for almost 50% of the total number of codes in the person appraisal category. Complaints may either explicitly state the source of dissatisfaction or refer to ongoing dissatisfaction (i.e., “he was thinking I could be more responsible,” *meta-perspective*; “this is one area Brian really needs to change,” *direct perspective*; or “they were being unfair” *direct perspective*). The second code with the most reported thoughts was imperatives, with 28% of person appraisal codes. These codes referred to what someone, other than self, should or should not be doing (e.g., “She was thinking I should be more outgoing,” *meta-perspective*; or “[he thinks] I should still be going to catechism” *meta-perspective*). The admission category contained the fewest reported thoughts (23%) of all person appraisals.

Process. These thoughts focused on communication acts and intentions. Of all the process/strategy codes, the most frequently reported was constructive engagement (44%). Engagement refers to thoughts or attributions about constructive communication behaviors that are exhibited in their discussion (i.e., “I could understand what my mom was saying,” *direct perspective*; “she’s being very patient,” *direct perspective*; or “I’m interested to

know how Paul feels,” *direct perspective*). The second process code with the most responses is general process. Neutral thoughts such as, “he’s just processing it all and trying to think” (*meta-perspective*), accounted for 30% of thoughts coded as process. Confrontation counted for 12% of codes in the process category and thoughts coded as avoidance accounted for 9% of strategy responses. The least reported process code was confusion (5%).

Other. The “other” category contained two subcategories: not knowing and unclear. Each of these counted for 5% of the total codeable responses.

Next I will explain the results of the tested hypotheses.

Hypotheses

The eight hypotheses proposed in the rationale of this study divide naturally into three subject areas: “storm and stress,” separation/peer identification, and cognitive development. Paired samples t-tests were used to compare means of the different variables for each hypothesis. Cohen’s *d* was used to measure the effect size of all significant results (Cohen, 1977). The larger standard deviation of the variable pairs was used to provide the most conservative effect size. Notably, the effect sizes all rated as either medium or large. Table 3 presents an overview of the effect sizes. Following, I will report the results of each hypothesis within the framework of its subject area, beginning with storm and stress.

Table 3

Overview of Effect Size

Effect Size	Paired Samples	<u>d</u> *
Large Effect	FF–CC Engagement	1.04
	FF–CF Engagement	.95
	MM–CC Engagement	.88
	FM–FC Agreement	.85
	CM–MM Imperative	.83
	MM–CM Engagement	.78
	FC–CC Process	.78
	CC–FC Issue	.76
Medium Effect	FC–CC Negativity	.66
	MF–MC Agreement	.66
	CF–FF Imperative	.62
	MC–CC Process	.58
	CC–MC Issue	.55
	CF–FC Not Knowing	.53
	MC–CC Negativity	.49
	MM–CC Positivity	.45
	FF–CC Positivity	.42

*Cohen, J. (1977)

Storm and Stress. Adolescence is often perceived to be a turbulent period of life for families. Both parents and adolescents have a stake in how the family is perceived. Communication, on one hand, can build bridges and keep parents and adolescents more closely in touch. On the other hand, communication can lead to misunderstanding. The results of the next five hypotheses provide a sense of the communication that takes place in families with adolescents. Table 4 presents an overview of the tested hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Based on literature regarding family communication and adolescence, I predicted that parents would attribute more negative thoughts to their adolescent children than adolescents would report for themselves. A paired samples t-test was used to compare the means of fathers' attribution of negative thoughts to children and children's self-reported negative thoughts. Likewise, the mean of mothers' attribution of negative thoughts was compared with children's report. Both fathers and mothers attributed significantly more negativity than the child reported ($t = 3.96, p < .001$; $t = 3.92, p < .001$, respectively). Thus, this hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 2: Literature regarding adolescence has indicated that parents have a stake in seeing the family more positively than the adolescent typically does. I tested this theory using a t-test to compare the means of positive thoughts reported by fathers and mothers with the positive thoughts reported by children. Both fathers and mothers reported a significantly greater number of positive thoughts than children reported, ($t = 2.05, p < .05$; $t = 2.46, p < .02$, respectively), supporting the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: The literature review described adolescence as a time when children desire to be more independent from parental control. Based on this premise, I predicted that children would attribute more imperative and solution thoughts to parents than parents would report thinking. In fact, children attributed significantly more imperative thoughts than fathers and mothers reported thinking ($t = 4.24, p < .001$, $t = 5.16, p < .001$, respectively). However, children's attributions of solution-oriented thoughts were not significantly greater than parents reported thinking.

Table 4

Paired Samples Tests: Set 1

		Column 1		Column 2		<u>d</u>
Hypotheses 1–5		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
H1	FC - CC Negativity	3.87	2.1	2.48	2.04	.66
	MC - CC Negativity	3.54	2.18	2.48	2.04	.49
H2	FF - CC Positivity	3.65	1.88	2.74	2.18	.42
	MM - CC Positivity	3.72	2.19	2.74	2.18	.45
H3	CF - FF Imperative	.85	1.13	.15	.36	.62
	CM - MM Imperative	1.00	1.03	.15	.42	.83
	CF - FF Solution	.52	.98	.46	.89	<u>ns</u>
	CM - MM Solution	.46	1.05	.37	.64	<u>ns</u>
H4	FF - CC Engagement	1.91	1.5	.35	.85	1.04
	MM - CC Engagement	1.93	1.79	.35	.85	.88
H5	FF - CF Engagement	1.91	1.5	.48	1.03	.95
	MM - CM Engagement	1.93	1.79	.54	.96	.78

Hypotheses 4 & 5: Literature suggests that the communication process between parents and adolescents is likely to be affected by the generational stake. First, I predicted that parents would report more constructively engaged conversation behavior for themselves than children would report thinking. The results indicate that both fathers and mothers reported significantly more engagement than children reported thinking ($t = 7.01$, $p < .001$; $t = 5.69$, $p < .001$, respectively).

Secondly, I predicted that children would attribute less constructive engagement to parents than parents would report thinking. In fact, children attributed significantly less

engagement to parents than fathers and mothers reported ($t = 5.98, p < .001$; $t = 5.12, p < .001$). Thus, both sets of hypotheses were supported. Next, I will present the results of hypotheses regarding peer identification.

Separation/Peer Identification. Adolescence is marked not only by a heightened expectation or awareness of conflict, but also by less identification with parents and seeking to identify more closely with peers. The parent versus peer lay theory is a result of this process. Analysis of the following two hypotheses may help reveal how much this lay theory contributes to misunderstanding between parents and adolescents. Table 5 summarizes the test of each hypothesis pertaining to peer identification.

Table 5

Paired Samples Test: Set 2

		Column 1		Column 2		
Hypotheses 6–7		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>d</u>
H6	FM - FC Agreement	1.54	1.33	.41	.65	.85
	MF - MC Agreement	1.67	1.52	.67	1.06	.66
H7	CF - FC Not Knowing	1.0	1.32	.30	.63	.53
	CM - MC Not Knowing	.61	1.16	.50	.91	<u>ns</u>

Hypothesis 6: Based on this shift of identification from parents to peers, I proposed that parents would attribute more agreement to each other than to their children. I used a t-test to compare the means of fathers' and mothers' attributions of agreement to their spouse with fathers' and mothers' attributions of agreement to children. Both fathers and mothers attributed significantly more agreement to their spouse than to their children ($t = 5.7, p < .001$; $t = 5.2, p < .001$, respectively). Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis 7: With the shift in identification that adolescents experience, I expected that the adolescents in this study would report not knowing what their parents were thinking a great deal of the time. However, because parents typically see their family in a positive light, I predicted that parents would assume they knew what their children were thinking. A t-test was used to compare the means of children's and parents attributions of not knowing. Children's reports of not knowing what fathers were thinking were significantly greater than fathers' reports of not knowing what their children were thinking ($t = 3.2, p < .01$). However, children's reports of not knowing what their mother was thinking were nearly equal to mothers' reports of not knowing ($t = .52, ns$). Thus, the hypothesis was supported for fathers only. Next, I will examine the results regarding the impact of cognitive development.

Cognitive Development. Fluctuating cognitive ability is often a source of conflict in families with adolescents. Young adolescents are not fully prepared for routine abstract thinking, and parents often misjudge children's domain of thinking which leads to overly rich attributions to the adolescent. One hypothesis is presented for this section, Table 6 presents a summary of the test of this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: With maturity, thought processes become more abstract and allow for more process-oriented thinking. However, concrete thinking is typically associated with early adolescence and predicts more issue-oriented thoughts. Therefore, I predicted that fathers and mothers would attribute more process thoughts and fewer issue appraisal thoughts to children than children report for themselves. The results show that fathers and mothers attributed significantly more process-oriented thoughts ($M = 2.76, 2.22$,

respectively) than children reported ($M = 1.22$; $t = 4.85$, $p < .001$; $t = 3.3$, $p < .01$, respectively). Further, children reported significantly more issue-oriented thoughts than fathers and mothers attributed to children ($t = 4.69$, $p < .001$; $t = 4.27$, $p < .001$). Thus, the hypothesis was supported.

Table 6

Paired Samples Test: Set 3

		Column 1		Column 2		<u>d</u>
Hypothesis 8		<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
H8	FC - CC Process	2.76	1.98	1.22	1.59	.78
	MC - CC Process	2.22	1.71	1.22	1.59	.58
	CC - FC Issue	5.93	2.59	3.98	2.23	.76
	CC - MC Issue	5.93	2.59	4.50	2.40	.55

Summary

Parents and adolescents appear to have very different perceptions of their communication. Results show that parents perceive significantly more negativity in adolescents and significantly more positivity in themselves, as compared to the thoughts of adolescents. This trend of differences carried through each of the three subject areas. Following is a detailed discussion of these results and the implications for family communication and conflict.

Discussion

Researchers have frequently investigated objective traits and experiences of the adolescent family. Researchers have also assessed attribution processes in various settings. This study analyzes the content of parents' and adolescents' attributions in conflict-oriented conversations. The results of this study make in-roads to understanding the perceptions, as well as misperceptions, of the family members that contribute to parent–adolescent conflict. Early in this paper, I suggested that conflict during adolescence is often viewed through a framework of lay theories or expectations. The analysis of family members' perceptions and meta-perceptions show that lay theories do indeed frame their understanding of parent–adolescent conflict. Following is a discussion of these results and the implications for understanding the conflict inherent in this stage of family development.

The Persistent Perception

The considerable research that cites adolescence as a period of increased conflict is largely supported by the findings in this paper. However, the bases of perceived negativity are quite complex. It was hypothesized that fathers and mothers would attribute significantly more negativity to the adolescent than the adolescent would report for him/herself. This hypothesis was upheld. However, the significance of this finding is easily understated. Many authors note that there is increased negativity and conflict during adolescence; however, the cause of conflict typically falls at the foot of the adolescent. Role negotiation, (im)maturity, and an adventurous spirit are likely contributors to this conflict. However, I would suggest that, because of the difficulty surrounding family members' role

negotiation at this life stage, parents' *perceptions* of negativity may be an even larger factor contributing to parent–adolescent conflict.

Adolescents' self-reports of negative thoughts (i.e., complaints, disagreement, dislikes, avoidance, confrontation, or negative emotions), were only slightly more numerous than what parents reported for themselves. Yet, both mothers and fathers attributed significantly more negativity to children than children or parents reported for themselves. In general, thoughts reported by family members displayed more neutral affect than general negativity. It seems likely that the distancing behaviors and patterns of communication used by adolescents to individuate themselves fuels the negativity attributed to adolescents by parents. Whether accurate or not, perceived negativity logically fuels more negativity, and hence, the perception may become a reality in a circular fashion. Interestingly, the most direct explanation or experience of conflict during this life stage appears to be based on the perception of negativity attributed to adolescent children, rather than being based on thoughts reported by the adolescent.

Another result related to the negativity index was that children attributed fewer negative thoughts to fathers than to mothers. Although this difference was not significant, the trend supports other studies of adolescence, which indicated less conflict with fathers and a higher level of conflict with mothers (Noller & Callan, 1991). One possible explanation for this difference is that children, overall, have more frequent and meaningful communication with mothers and less interaction time with fathers. They are, therefore, less likely to clearly know of fathers' dissatisfactions. In fact, the results from this study indicated that fathers attributed greater negativity to children than mothers or any other

dyadic combination.

Another factor affecting perceived negativity is the “generational stake” hypothesis, as discussed in the following section.

The Generational Stake

Fueled by the generational stake, both parents naturally want to view the product of their time, love and energy with the most positive lens available, even if it is a somewhat socially created view. The contrasting needs of adolescents, to minimize parental control, and parents, to positively view their family, create an encompassing theme of conflict during this life stage. The preceding discussion of negativity also relates to the generational stake hypothesis, however, perceived negativity was such a central factor in the research that it was given separate consideration.

A second factor affected by the generational stake is the positivity of perceptions. Mothers and fathers reported a significantly greater number of positive thoughts than children reported. This finding supports the conclusion that parents are motivated to maintain positive perceptions of family interactions (Bengston & Kuyper, 1971; Noller & Callan, 1988, 1986). A noteworthy aspect of this finding is the consistency between family members. The fewest positive thoughts were attributed to or reported by the child; a moderate number of positive thoughts was attributed to parents by the child; and the most positive thoughts were reported by parents and attributed by parents to one another. All members agreed that children would have the fewest positive thoughts and parents the greatest number, based both on thoughts attributed to others *and* self-reported thoughts. This is a clear indication of parents maximizing the results of their considerable investment

in the family and children minimizing the impact of this investment in their lives. Clearly, one can see how this finding reinforces parents' perception of children's negativity, even though the child's motivations are innocent and somewhat necessary for their development.

A third area where the generational stake may affect perception, is in the area of parental control. In this study I operationalized control in terms of imperative thoughts. The results indicated that children attributed significantly more imperative thoughts to parents than parents reported for themselves. Adolescence is marked by a child's desire to have increasing control over his/her life. Whether perceived or actual, parents are seen as thwarting this desire by attempting to control the child's actions. I suspected that children would also see parents as solution-oriented, trying to exert further control by resolving issues and problems for them. However, this hypothesis was not confirmed. I also expected that there would be more reciprocity in participants' attributions of imperative thoughts, with parents and adolescents both thinking the other is trying to control decision-making. Interestingly, the only significant result was that adolescents attributed more parental control than parents reported. Whether parents exercise control in other ways is not obvious from this study. However, the fact that children attributed so much control to parents, when not warranted by parents' thoughts, suggests hypersensitivity to control on the part of adolescents. This may further fuel the perception of adolescent negativity among parents.

A fourth area potentially affected by the generational stake, is the communication process between parents and adolescents. Parents reported significantly more engaged, constructive process-oriented thoughts than children reported, and significantly more than children attributed to parents. There are several possible reasons for these results. One

explanation, within the scope of the generational stake hypothesis, is that parents see themselves and their efforts to communicate more positively than children do. Another plausible explanation is that parents consciously think about, strategize, listen, and contribute to the conversation in a planned way and, therefore, would likely report that more frequently than adolescents. Parents would also see constructive engagement in children and attribute it to children with greater recurrence. In light of this possibility, I compared fathers' attributions of constructive engagement to children against children's attributions of constructive engagement to self. This comparison was nearly significant. Thus, the results tentatively suggest that adults may consciously consider the communication process and make assessments of it more routinely than children.

Peers or Parents

Another theme of parent–child conflict during adolescence is the perceived competition between parents and peers. This competition for investment often leaves parents and adolescents feeling polarized and parents feeling more similar to one another. Two features of adolescent family separateness and peer identification were tested: the first has to do with the amount of agreement family members attribute to one another; the second relates to family members' perception of knowing what others are thinking. The first set of results indicated that parents attributed significantly more agreement to each other than to adolescent children. It seems logical that parents would think their spouses agree with them more than their children do, especially during conflicted conversation with adolescents. However, there seem to be other factors to account for. For instance, mothers and fathers both attributed significantly more agreement to the spouse than they reported for

themselves. Adolescents also attributed more agreement to both parents than adolescents reported for self. Thus, it seems that assumed agreement may simply be a function of self-focus. We see other people as agreeing with us, instead of us agreeing with them.

The second set of tests considered how much family members reported knowing what other family members were thinking. Children reported not knowing what fathers were thinking less often than fathers assumed. There was no such discrepancy between children and mothers. Other evidence suggests that adolescents have more conflicts with mothers but mothers understand them better and have more positive interactions with them than with fathers (Noller & Callan, 1991; Acock & Bengtson, 1980). This conclusion is further confirmed by the above results.

Cognitive Changes

Cognitive changes, intermingled with the persistence of negativity during this life stage, present many challenges to adolescent family communication. In this study, parents attributed significantly more process thoughts and significantly fewer issue appraisal thoughts to children than children reported. As children proceed through adolescence, they become increasingly capable of more abstract thought processes. However, with their increasing capabilities comes a parental expectation of more advanced and abstract thought processes. Conflict and perceived negativity are likely fueled by these differences. Nonetheless, the results indicate that younger adolescents tend to be concrete thinkers and more issue-oriented (versus process-oriented) in conversation than parents assume.

Although adolescents are quite capable of more abstract thought processes, abstract thought processes do not characterize their primary mode of thinking about communicating.

Importantly, parents would do well to set aside their expectations and foster what can be considered a constructive style of conflict management. Despite the fact that parents attributed considerable negativity to children, the conflict conversations in the study did not generally escalate. Conflicts that remain issue-oriented, rather than focusing on conversation processes or the persons involved, are far more likely to be resolved (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). The issue focus and elaborative style of talking about perceptions of family matters seems to lend itself positively toward the situational conflict experienced within the parameters of this study.

Limitations

The homogeneity of the sample may pose limitations for generalizing the results of this study. Noller and Callan (1991) reported that poor or working-class families have greater amounts of conflict than middle and upper class families. The sample in this study was predominantly Caucasian, well-educated, and in the mid- to upper-income level. Thus, a more diverse sample might show a greater amount and intensity of conflict. However, instead of reversing the trends observed in this research, a more diverse sample with greater conflict might be expected to manifest even greater differences in perceptions between family members.

A possible refinement in the discussion task would be to have a conversation topic specifically about how much control a parent should have over a specific area of adolescents' lives, such as friends, music or clothing. It is when issues cut right to the aspect of parental control, that other topics such as friends or style of dress, begin to reveal the true nature of adolescents' and parents' divergent views. Because the greater number of

families' perceptions about their conversations were elaboration statements, there were proportionately fewer perceptions of emotions or process-oriented thoughts. Potentially, this refinement may affect the high number of issue-oriented, elaboration statements that dominated the video-assisted recall process.

Appendix A

Sample Transcript of Video Assisted Recall

Direct Perspectives

Meta-Perspectives

<p>dd01 What were you thinking during this part of the conversation? Umm, I was thinking ... ah I guess I was thinking how I hated cleaning my room and how I really didn't want to get rid of my stuffed animals and my stuff. And I guess I was thinking that, I don't know, I guess I was thinking what I was saying. I don't know, is that good?</p>		<p>md01 What do you think your daughter was thinking? Oh dear, what do I think she was thinking? Probably wishing she didn't have to worry about that, I suppose. Um, and like she said, she would like to keep everything so she's probably--she might have been thinking about what it is she could get rid of, I guess. She might have been thinking about that, too. Anything else that... that I think she was thinking about?</p>
<p>dd02 What were you thinking? I was thinking about how it would be very difficult to get rid of my stuffed animals and I was thinking about how, I guess I was kinda lucky that my parents gave me so many more than my sisters got. And ... um I guess I was kinda thinking about my stuffed animals, I guess. I guess my mind was wandering off to certain ones and where I got them. And I was thinking about all my other junk that I probably should get rid of too. And ... I don't know. Anything else? No, not really.</p>		<p>md02 What about your daughter? Again she was probably just trying to think of what it was she could get rid of, yaknow? I mean she just, she just really likes her stuff. I mean she surrounds herself on the bed with the stuff, she likes to see them, and um, I remember doing that when I was a kid too. Yaknow, having the stuffed animals lined up around the bed. That was a cozy feeling. So I imagine that's what she was thinking, was that she'd like to have it neater but there's nothing she really wants to get rid of. Yaknow, although recently we did, we talked about that.</p>
<p>dd03 What were you thinking during this part? Well I was thinking about some of the stuffed animals that I had got from my sisters. And I was thinking about some of the ones that I had gotten them. And I was thinking about some that I could get rid of, ones that I wasn't so attached to. And ... Anything else? I was thinking that I'd like to get my room cleaned up but I don't really like cleaning my room. That's probably about it.</p>		<p>md03 Okay, how about your daughter? What she was thinking? Let's see. I suppose she mightta had a, a little overwhelming feeling from, because uh, or feeling overwhelmed because she has to deal with those things, too. Yaknow, what her sister wants to give her. And she hates, I mean, she's a real saver and she doesn't like to see things just thrown somewhere. She would like to maybe accept them into her little family of toys and whatever.</p>

Appendix B

Coding Procedures for Video Recall Assessment of Parent-Adolescent Communication and Understanding

Overview

The categories in the coding scheme describe thoughts and feelings reported by parents and adolescents during the conflict discussion segment of this study. The coding scheme is designed to analyze the perceptions and meta-perceptions reported by family members during video-assisted recall. The categories and specific codes were developed inductively by a team of coders, based on a sample of data from the video recall transcripts and a previous manual for coding of the video assisted recall (Sillars, Dun & Roberts, 1999).

Purpose

The coding scheme is designed to reveal families' on-line processing of communication, notably the differences of perceptions between parents and adolescents. This coding scheme particularly emphasizes (a) the domain of thought, and (b) the differentiation in self versus partner focus (i.e., perceptions versus meta-perceptions). The coding scheme is designed to code subjective accounts of interaction, rather than observational data, therefore, every unit of analysis is treated as a thought.

Four aspects of interpersonal communication are used to broadly distinguish the categories of specific codes: emotion, issue appraisal, person appraisal, and process/strategy. Emotion refers to emotional states that are referred to in the discussion. Issue appraisal refers to evaluation or discussion of the conversation topic or objectifiable issues. Person appraisal refers to evaluation or discussion of persons or relationships. Process/strategy refers to communication acts or intentions pertaining to the immediate conversation. Each thematic subcategory contains additional, specific codes to accurately describe family perceptions. In addition, there are two codes, not knowing and uncodeable, that characterize specific circumstances throughout the recall data.

Data Coding Procedures

Unit of Analysis. The first step in the coding procedure is to determine the basic unit of analysis. The first stated thought (or meta-perception) is treated as the unit of analysis. Parents and adolescents often talk generally about the subject matter before stating their thoughts or attributions of thoughts to other family members. In this situation, coders are to moderately disregard the verbiage up to the point that they refer specifically to their own thoughts or others' thoughts. If a thought is not stated in a segment of transcript, it is coded "uncodeable." The first stated thought is the unit of analysis unless the continuing sentence clarifies or further expands the stated thought.

Coding Sequence. To make the coding consistent and to simplify the process, coding decisions are made in a two-step sequence. First, determine the main thematic category that the unit of analysis falls under (i.e., emotion, issue or person appraisal, or process/strategy). Second, assign a specific code from the thematic subcategories. Reliability tends to decrease and coding becomes more random when coders, accustomed to the code definitions, reverse this sequence and assign specific codes first.

Coding Direct and Meta-Perspectives. Some codes are especially difficult to code based on the perspective that is being given. Whether family members are reporting their own thoughts or attributing thoughts to other family members is an important distinction that can easily be overlooked. Codes such as imperative or admission can be judged incorrectly if not based on the appropriate perspective statement. For instance, if in a direct perspective the child reports thinking he “should’ve gone to catechism,” it is coded “admission.” However, if the meta-perspective (child thinks mother is thinking) is “[she thinks] that I should go to catechism,” it is coded “imperative.”

Category Descriptions and Examples

Emotions. The emotion codes describe affective states reported by the subject or attributed to another family member. The purpose of this code is to reconstruct conscious emotional experiences attended to by family members.

1. Positive emotions: happiness, gladness, luck, love, affection, excitement or other pleasant emotional states.

I just feel lucky that my kids are responsible.

I appreciated Marny going to bat for that.

(Meta)

He’s content...

She was feeling proud.

2. Negative emotions: sadness, worry, depression, anger, frustration, anxiety or other unpleasant emotional states.

I’m feeling a little bit sad.

...makes me feel a little bit guilty.

(Meta)

He was probably getting bored.

He’s concerned.

Issue Appraisal. The issue appraisal codes refer to discussion or evaluation of the conversation or other objectifiable issues. For example, family members may talk about a disagreement earlier that week or they may talk about how their cat needs to lose weight. Issue appraisal thoughts typically resemble a continuation of the dialogue. Issue appraisals have some similarities to process codes in that they both talk about situations. The distinction is that process codes refer to actions or behaviors relating to the communication at hand; appraisal codes refer to passive/internal reactions rather than communicative acts.

1. Elaboration: refers to neutral thoughts or analysis of issues; elaboration statements do not convey any judgment.

I was giving one of my little lectures in life.

I was thinking about some of the t.v. shows I watch.

We don't take the time to really communicate.

(Meta)

...how he'd look on t.v.

...we do Sunday nights together and that's okay.

2. Likes: refers to positive thoughts or analysis of issues; describes the conversation in a positive manner.

It was fun to go somewhere with just my parents.

I like to do things with my family.

I did a pretty good job.

(Meta)

He appreciates the friends of the kids.

3. Dislikes: refers to negative thoughts or analysis of issues; describes the conversation in a negative manner.

It makes it a little more of a hassle that way.

I don't really like losing.

(Meta)

She was tired of doing all the work.

He really doesn't care.

4. Agreement: discussing similarity of opinions or feelings.

We were seeing eye-to-eye.

(Meta)

She was thinking the same thing I was.

5. Disagreement: indicating dissimilarity or incongruence of opinions or feelings.

I don't agree with him.

(Meta)

She didn't agree with us.

6. Solution: thinking directly or indirectly about solutions to problems or conflicts.

If it was such a mess we could take more time to clean it up.

(Meta)

She saw that as a way that people could be happier.

...how I could do homework sometimes by myself.

...how are we gonna get this done.

Person Appraisal. The person appraisal codes refer to discussion or evaluation of the person or relationship. For example, family members may express criticism of one another or state what another should or should not be doing. Person appraisals represent evaluation of self, other family member, or relationship and typically involve trait attributions.

1. Complaint: expressing pain or dissatisfaction with another family member, statements of criticism, fault-finding or annoyance. May be direct or indirect.

I would like some appreciation

(Meta)

She's always trying to get in a little more t.v.

...if I tried harder, I could do more.

2. Imperative: stating what someone, other than self, should or should not do.

They need to be here for dinner.

She should be stricter about telling me...

(Meta)

...I should be more outgoing.

I should still be going to catechism.

3. Admission: accepting responsibility for actions or problems. Can include self-criticism.

If I tried I could do everything.

(Meta)

She should be less critical of Karen.

Process/Strategy. Process/strategy codes reference communication acts and intentions having to do with the ongoing discussion. These codes indicate what family members are seen as doing or attempting to do in the discussion.

1. Constructive Engagement: Discussing a group project or working together. Trying to help or solve conflicts in a collaborative manner, listening, compromising, and other cooperative acts.

I could understand what my mom was saying.

I'm interested to know how Paul feels.

(Meta)

She's being very patient.

She was listening to the problem.

2. Avoidance: Intentionally shifting focus from self or from what is going on, lying, not answering, or making excuses.

Rather than getting mad, I get up and leave.

I don't want to talk about it.

(Meta)

She's not telling the truth.

3. Confrontation: Negatively directed to other participants, taking a negative stance, blaming, defending self or other.

I was thinking about defending Karen.

It's her fault.

How can this not make sense, how difficult can this be?

(Meta)

She's a little defensive.

My frustration at trying to talk to him.

4. Confusion: Statements indicating lack of understanding by the speaker...can be indicated by not finishing thoughts, interrupting self, multiple verbalized pauses or listing multiple perspectives.

Um, I wasn't sure what my dad was saying.

I'm not sure what you're saying.

(Meta)

He doesn't realize...uhm...

5. General Process: Referring generally to the discussion, not the topic, of the current conversation. Does not fit into any other process category.

I had been talking to her about tolerance.

(Meta)

He's just processing it all.

Don't Know. The "don't know" code refers to specific statements of not knowing what self or other was thinking. Participant does not have a perspective statement for that segment.

Uncodeable. No perspective statement is given, it is unclear or unintelligible.

References

- Acock, A. C. & Bengston, V. L. (1978). On the relative influence of mothers and fathers: A covariance analysis of political and religious socialisation. Journal of Marriage and the Family 40, 519-530.
- Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Chovil, N., & Mullett, J. (1992). Equivocal communication. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Baxter, B. A. & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). Relating: Dialogues and dialectics. New York: Guilford.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. Journal of Early Adolescence 11, 56-95.
- Bengston, V. L. & Kuypers, J. A. (1971). Generational differences and the developmental stake. Aging and Human Development, 2, 249-260.
- Bissonnette, V. L., Rusbult, C. E., & Kilpatrick, S. D. (1997). Empathic accuracy and marital conflict resolution. In W. Ickes (Ed.), Empathic accuracy, (pp. 251-281). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Bulcroft, R. A. (1991). The value of physical change in adolescence: Consequences for the parent-adolescent exchange relationship. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 20, 89-105.
- Chovil, N. (1994). Equivocation as an interactional event. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), The dark side of interpersonal communication, (pp. 105-123). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Clark, M. S., Pataki, S. P., & Carver, V. H. (1996). Some thoughts on self-presentation of emotions in relationships. In G. Fletcher & J. Fitness (Eds.), Knowledge structures in close relationships: A social psychological approach (pp. 247-274). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Clausen, J. A. (1986). The life course: A sociological perspective. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cohen, J. (1977). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences. (Rev. Ed.). New York: Academic Press.
- Coleman, J. (1961). The adolescent society. New York: Free Press.

- Colvin, C. R., Vogt, D., & Ickes, W. (1997). Why do friends understand each other better than strangers do? In W. Ickes (Ed.), Empathic accuracy, (pp. 169-193). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Conger, J. J. (1981). Freedom and commitment: Families, youth and social change. American Psychologist, 36, 1475-1484.
- Demo, D. H., Small, S. A., & Savin-Williams, R. C. (1987). Family relations and the self-esteem of adolescents and their parents. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49, 705-715.
- Dornbusch, S. (1989). The sociology of adolescence. Annual Review of Sociology, 15, 233-259.
- Ellis, G. J. (1986). Societal and parental predictors of parent-adolescent conflict. In G. K. Leigh and G. W. Peterson (Eds.), Adolescents in families. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- Erikson, E. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. New York: Norton.
- Feldman, S. S., & Elliott, G. R., (Eds.). (1990). At the threshold. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fincham, F. D., Bradbury, T. N., & Grych, J. H. (1989). Conflict in close relationships: the role of intrapersonal phenomena. Advances in Applied Social Psychology.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. & Ritchie, L. D. (1994). Communication schemata within the family. Human Communication Research, 20, 275-301.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. & Vangelisti, A. L. (Eds.) (1995). Explaining family interactions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fletcher, G. J. O. & Thomas, G. (1996). Close relationship lay theories: Their structure and function. In G. J. O. Fletcher and J. Fitness (Eds.), Knowledge structures in close relationships: A social psychological approach. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Freud, S. (1938). The basic writings of Sigmund Freud, (A. A. Brill Trans.). New York: The Modern Library.
- Gage, N. L., & Cronbach, L. J. (1955). Conceptual and methodological problems in interpersonal perception. Psychological Bulletin, 53, 258-266.

- Gecas, V. & Schwalbe, M. L. (1986). Parental behavior and adolescent self-esteem. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48, 37-46.
- Gecas, V. & Seff, M. A. (1990). Families and adolescents: A review of the 1980s. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52, 941-958.
- Gottman, J. M., Notarius, C., Markman, H., Bank, S., Yoppi, B., & Rubin, M. E. (1976). Behavior exchange theory and marital decision making. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34, 14-23.
- Grotevant, H. D. & Cooper, C. R. (1985). Patterns of interaction in family relationships and the development of identity exploration in adolescence. Child Development.
- Grotevant, H. D. & Cooper, C. R. (1986). Individuation in family relationships: A perspective on individual differences in the development of identity and role-taking skills in adolescence. Human Development, 29, 82-100.
- Guthrie, D. M. & Noller, P. (1988). Married couples' perceptions of one another in emotional situations. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), Perspectives on marital interaction, (pp. 153-181). Cleveland, OH: Multilingual Matters.
- Hall, G. S. (1904). Adolescence: Its psychology and its relation to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education. New York: D. Appleton.
- Harter, S. (1990). Adolescent thinking. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), At the threshold (pp. 352-387). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hartup, W. W. (1979). Cross-age vs. same-age peer interaction. In V. L. Allen (Ed.), Children as teachers. New York: Academic Press.
- Hocking, J. E., Bauchner, J. E., Kaminski, E. P., & Miller, G. P. (1979). Detecting deceptive communication from verbal, visual, and paralinguistic cues. Human Communication Research, 6, 33-46.
- Ickes, W. (1993). Empathic accuracy. Journal of Personality, 61, 587-610.
- Ickes, W. (Ed.), (1997). Empathic accuracy. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Ickes, W. & Simpson, (1997). Managing empathic accuracy in close relationships. In W. Ickes (Ed.), Empathic accuracy, (pp. 218-250). New York: The Guilford Press.

- Ickes, W., Stinson, L., Bissonnette, V., & Garcia, S. (1990). Naturalistic social cognition: Methodology, assessment, and validation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59, 730-742.
- Ickes, W. & Tooke, W. (1988). The observational method: Studying the interaction of minds and bodies. In S. Duck, D. Hay, S. Hobfoll, W. Ickes, & B. Montgomery (Eds.), The handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research, and intervention (pp. 79-97). Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Jacob, T. & Seilhamer, R. A. (1985). Adaptation of the areas of change questionnaire for parent-child relationship assessment. The American Journal of Family Therapy, 13, 28-38.
- Jessop, D. J. (1981). Family relationships as viewed by parents and adolescents: A specification. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 43, 95-107.
- Jordaan, J. P. (1963). Exploratory behavior: The formation of self and occupational concepts. In D. E. Super, R. Starishevsky, N. Matlin, & J. Jordann (Eds.), Career development: Self-concept theory. (pp. 42-78). Princeton, NJ: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Kandel, D. & Lesser, G. (1972). Youth in two worlds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Keating, D. P. (1990). Adolescent thinking. In S. S. Feldman & G. R. Elliott (Eds.), At the threshold (pp. 54-89). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kidwell, J., Fischer, J. L., Dunham, R. M., & Baranowski, M. (1983). Parents and adolescents: Push and pull of change. In H. I. McCubbin & C. R. Figley (Eds.), Stress and the family: Vol. 1. New York: Brunner/Mazel Inc.
- Kraut, R. E. (1980). Humans as lie detectors: Some second thoughts. Journal of Communication, 30, 209-216.
- Kruglanski, A. W. (1989). The psychology of being "right": The problem of accuracy in social perception and cognition. Psychological Bulletin, 106, 395-409.
- Laing, R. D., Phillipson, H., & Lee, A. R. (1966). Interpersonal perception: A theory and a method of research. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). The seasons of a man's life. New York: Knopf.
- Marangoni, C., Garcia, S., Ickes, W., & Teng, G. (1995). Empathic accuracy in a clinically relevant setting. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68, 854-869.

- Matteson, D. R. (1977). Exploration and commitment: Sex differences and methodological problems in the use of identity status categories. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 6, 349-370.
- Miller, G. R., Mongeau, P. A., & Sleight, C. (1986). Fudging with friends and lying to lovers: Deceptive communication in personal relationships. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 3, 495-512.
- Montemayor, R. (1983). Parents and adolescents in conflict: All families some of the time and some families most of the time. Journal of Early Adolescence, 3, 83-103.
- Mullis, A. Y, Mullis, R. L., & Normandin, D. (1992). Cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons of adolescent self-esteem. Adolescence, 27, 51-61.
- Murray, S. L. & Holmes, J. G. (1996). The construction of relationship realities. In G. J. O. Fletcher & J. Fitness (Eds.), Knowledge structures in close relationships: A social psychological approach, (pp. 91-120). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Niemi, R. G. (1968). A methodological study of political socialization in the family. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms.
- Noller, P. (1995). Parent-adolescent relationships. In M. A. Fitzpatrick & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), Explaining family interactions, (pp. 77-111). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Noller, P. & Bagi, S. (1985). Parent-adolescent communication. Journal of Adolescence, 8, 125-144.
- Noller, P. & Callan, V. (1986). Adolescent and parent perceptions of family cohesion and adaptability. Journal of Adolescence, 9, 97-106.
- Noller, P. & Callan, V. (1988). Understanding parent-adolescent interactions: Perceptions of family members and outsiders. Developmental Psychology, 24, 707-714.
- Noller, P. & Callan, V. (1990). Adolescents' perceptions of the nature of their communication with parents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 19, 349-362.
- Noller, P. & Callan, V. (1991). The adolescent in the family. London: Routledge.
- Noller, P. & Vernardos, C. (1986). Communication awareness in married couples. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 3, 31-42.
- Offer, D. (1969). The psychological world of the teenager. New York: Basic Books.

- Offer, D., Ostrava, E., & Howard, K. I. (1981). The adolescent: A psychological self-portrait. New York: Basic Books.
- Offer, D. & Sabshin, M. (Eds.) (1984). Normality and the life cycle. New York: Basic Books.
- Olson, D. H., Sprenkle, D. H., & Russell, C. S. (1979). Circumplex model of marital and family systems 1: Cohesion and adaptability dimensions, family types, and clinical applications. Family Process, 18, 3-28.
- Pasley, K. & Gecas, V. (1984). Stresses and satisfactions of the parental role. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 2, 400-404.
- Paulson, S. E. (1994). Relations of parenting style and parental involvement with ninth-grade students' achievement. Journal of Early Adolescence, 14, 250-267.
- Rice, F. P. (1975). The adolescent: Development, relationships, and culture. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovik, L. E., & Lipkus, I. (1991). Accommodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary empirical evidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 53-78.
- Schank, R. C. (1982). Dynamic memory. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sebald, H. (1986). Adolescents' shifting orientation toward parents and peers: A curvilinear trend over recent decades. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 48, 5-13.
- Sillars, A. L. (1998). Misunderstanding. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), The dark side of relationships. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sillars, A. L., Dun, T. & Roberts, L. J. (1999). Interaction cognition coding scheme. Unpublished manuscript, University of Montana.
- Sillars, A. L., Koerner, A., Fitzpatrick, M., & Kampen, A. (1998). Multi-method assessment of parent-adolescent understanding. Unpublished manuscript.
- Sillars, A. L., & Scott, M. D. (1983). Interpersonal perception between intimates: An integrative review. Human Communication Research, 10, 153-176.
- Silverberg, S. & Steinberg, L. (1987). Adolescent autonomy, parent-adolescent conflict, and parental well-being. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 16, 293-312.

- Simmons, R. G. & Blyth, D. A. (1987). Moving into adolescence: The impact of pubertal change and school context. New York: Aldine DeGruyter.
- Small, S. A., Cornelius, S., & Eastman, G. (1983). Parenting adolescent children: A period of adult storm and stress? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Anaheim, CA.
- Spitzberg, B. A. (1994). The dark side of (in)competence. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.). The dark side of interpersonal communication, (pp. 25-49). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Steinberg, L. & Silverberg, S. (1986). The vicissitudes of autonomy in early adolescence. Child Development 57, 841-851.
- Steinberg, L. (1987). Recent research on the family at adolescence: The extent and nature of sex differences. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 16, 191-197.
- Stinson, & Ickes, W. (1992). Empathic accuracy in the interactions of male friends versus male strangers. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62, 787-797.
- Stone, L. J., & Church, (1968). Childhood and adolescence: A psychology of the growing person (2nd ed.). New York: Random House.
- Thomas, G., & Fletcher, G. J. (1997). Empathic accuracy in close relationships. In W. Ickes (Ed.), Empathic accuracy, (pp. 194-217). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Weiner, B. (1985). Spontaneous causal thinking. Psychological Bulletin, 97, 74-84.
- Whitbeck, L. B. & Gecas, V. (1988). Value attribution and transmission between parents and children. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 829-840.
- White, K. M., Speisman, J. C., & Costos, D. (1983). Young adults and their parents: Individuation to mutuality. In H. D. Grotevant & C. R. Cooper (Eds.), Adolescent development in the family: New directions for child development (pp. 61-76). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wilmot, W. W. & Hocker, J. L. (1998). Interpersonal conflict. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Youniss, J. & Smollar, J. (1985). Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers, and friends. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.